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OR,
**THE BOOTBLACK BRAVO
IN SAN FRANCISCO.**

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THE "CIBUTA JOHN" STORIES, "RED-
LIGHT RALPH," "BAREBACK
BETH," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.
AT A HEATHEN CEREMONIAL.
"SWEET pertaters!"
The same Billy, only a little more so.
But he was not in his native city. He was
thousands of miles away from home, and "Skin-
ny," his partner, was with him.
They were in San Francisco.

"TELL YER HIGH MUCK-A-MUCK I AM A BOOTBLACK NABOB, ALL TH' WAY FROM NEW
YORK, AN' THAT I'VE GOT A BIG PIECE OF RASCALITY TER DISCLOSE TER HIM."

It was the afternoon of a pleasant day, and to the two gamins it seemed that there was something of a holiday air about the city, as though it were taking an afternoon outing.

They had paused at the "Lotta Fountain," one of the focal points of the town, and were looking around, enjoying the pleasing panorama that passed before their eyes. From this point branch five important streets, and the throng of vehicles coming along them seemed never-ending, while pedestrians innumerable filed irregularly by in endless procession.

In one direction Market street leads away to the Oakland Ferry, and in the other toward the distant Mission Hills. On one hand Geary street stretches away toward Lone Mountain and its neighboring cemeteries, reaching out on the other hand in the direction of Golden Gate Park. Third street extends to the water front at a different angle from Market. Kearney street is another of the five mentioned, and Montgomery, the last, comes out only a few steps away.

It was at this point, as stated, that the two lads had stopped to look about them, and it was while standing there that Broadway Billy gave voice to the exclamation with which our story opens.

"What's th' matter?" Skinny immediately queried.

"What's th' matter!" repeated Billy; "that's jest what I'd like ter know, my gay an' festive fat partner. Kin it be possible that we, William o' Broadway an' his 'Skinny' pard, are actoolly here in San Francisco?"

"I reckon it is, Billy," Skinny averred; "seems ter me that I have a sort o' dim recollection o' comin' here."

At this Billy laughed.

But, an explanation is in order.

Broadway Billy's nineteenth birthday had found him a stout, broad-shouldered youth, with a physique equal to that of the best of young men at twenty-one; but his face was still the face of a boy of merry fifteen, and as he was not tall it was still easy for him to "play off" for much younger than he really was, as occasion required. In experience he was old, being wise beyond his years, but nothing needs be said of that. He was, to all intents and purposes, too, a trained athlete. In short, he was just such a youth as he had made himself by a boyhood free from vice, and free from tobacco and strong drink; instead of which he had taken plenty of wholesome food, exercise, and sleep.

This nineteenth birthday, too, found him with two thousand five hundred dollars in bank. He began to realize that he was no longer a boy, but that he was about to step over into manhood's estate. It was a serious period, and he was giving it a good deal of serious thought. He and Skinny were still in business, but Billy saw that the time was at hand when that business must be enlarged. He had no idea or intention of being a "curbstone" merchant all his days. Skinny, too, had saved quite a sum, and at last it was decided that they should go into partnership anew in a business on a larger scale, and enter upon their real mercantile careers.

Before this resolve was carried into effect, however, something occurred to lead the boys to put it off for a time. One day there came to the corner stand a man whom Billy thought he recognized, but whose name he could not recall. The man knew Billy at sight, though, and greeted him heartily. He proved to be the sailor who had on one occasion saved Billy's life. He was now captain of a vessel, a big three-master, and was about to sail around "The Horn" for San Francisco. He wanted Billy and Skinny to go with him, and really insisted that they should go. A consultation was held with the boys' mothers, which resulted in the decision that the boys should make the voyage. The two women were to take charge of the business until their return. Some of Billy's friends heard of it, and they gave the boys a "royal send-off," supplying them with a big purse of money so that their trip might not cost them a cent.

They sailed, their voyage was without serious accident, and arrived safely at their destination. And so we find them in San Francisco, about an hour after they had taken leave of their good friend and come ashore. They had registered at a down street hotel, had seen their baggage safely into their room, and so were free to go where they would.

It was their intention to spend some time in San Francisco, and then to start East by rail, stopping at various places.

Skinny had been sea-sick during three straight weeks of their voyage, and it was that he referred when he said he had a dim recollection of coming.

"Yes, I should think you would have some recollection of it, Skinny, and that's a fact," Billy remarked. "You orter remember that voyage to your dyin' day, unless you heaved up your memory along with everything else in payin' your respects to old Neptune. Sweet pertaters! but you did jest almost turn yourself inside-out, and no mistake. You are thinner than ever. If it wasn't fer yer clothes you wouldn't make a healthy shadder on th' ground. I must take ye inter th' first drug store we find an' have ye weighed."

"Take me inter a drug store ter have me weighed!" Skinny exclaimed in surprise; "what would ye take me inter a drug store ter weigh me fer?"

"Cause you've got so awful thin that ye won't tip th' beam at more than twelve ounces to th' pound any more."

"Oh! you git out!"

Skinny was, indeed, thinner than ever, if possible. He was now about the leanest well boy ever seen. Billy, though, had added to his store of solid flesh and muscle, and was tanned as brown as a berry. Both lads were neatly dressed, wearing caps and blue pea-jackets, and looked like youthful sailors—Billy especially.

"Yes, I guess we must be here sure enough," Billy decided, after a laugh at his own joke; "all th' evidence seems ter pint that way, anyhow."

"It looks like it," Skinny agreed, adding: "Well, what d'ye think of th' place, Billy?"

"There! now you strike me hard," Billy cried. "What do I think o' th' City of S. Francisco, eh? Well, at first blush, as th' shy maiden said when she got her first kiss, I ruther like it. How does it hit you?"

"About th' same, I guess."

"Well, which way shall we go?"

"S'pose we may as well foller th' crowd."

"All right, then; fall in; forward, march!"

Kearney street seemed to be the favorite promenade, and it was into that thoroughfare that the two lads turned.

"This street ain't a heap different from our Bowery," Skinny decided as they walked along.

"Right you are," Billy asserted; "there seems ter be plenty of jewelers and pawnbrokers. Th' Bowery can't show any o' these Japanese and Chinese shops, though, Skinny."

"That's so, an' th' Chinese of Mott street ain't jest like these we see here, either. See how they carry things!"

"Look as though they'd jest stepped off o' tea-chests," Billy commented.

Kearney street can boast of a goodly number of such shops, although that is not their regular quarter of the town; and as the ubiquitous "John" is in San Francisco in force, the almond-eyed Celestials are to be seen everywhere, many of them carrying burdens in a pair of wicker baskets, one at each end of a bamboo-rod hung across the shoulders.

"It is plain ter be seen why this street is th' most crowded," Skinny further observed.

"Cause folks is too lazy ter climb hills, eh?" Billy guessed.

"Yes," Skinny admitted; "an' I don't blame 'em much, either. It must be a back-breaker ter git up some o' th' hills."

"I allow you're right, partner."

Thus they went on, "taking in" everything that was to be seen, and commenting upon everything they saw.

They wandered about from street to street until they grew tired of that, and then they started out of the city to take a view of the surrounding country.

In the course of their long stroll they came upon the Chinese cemetery, away out among the dreary and melancholy sand-dunes by the ocean. This cemetery adjoins that of the city's paupers, and it is marked off by white fences into separate plots, or *tongs*.

It so happened that the two lads had arrived there at a most opportune time, for this was the day of the annual propitiation for the spirits of the dead, and the Chinese were beginning to assemble to perform the peculiar ceremonial rites incident to that great occasion.

One after another common Express wagons and other vehicles arrived, each one bringing a freight of Chinamen and women, together with curiously assorted stocks of provisions which were quickly unloaded and laid upon small wooden altars, of which there was one in front of each *tong*.

"What in all creation is goin' on?" Broadway Billy questioned. "It looks as if there was goin' ter be a Chinese picnic, Fatty."

"I guess that's th' racket," Skinny agreed. "They've got grub enough along ter stock a hotel."

"We'll stop awhile an' take it in. We're here

ter see th' sights, an' this promises ter be one of 'em."

"Right you are."

As fast as the vehicles arrived the Celestials unloaded themselves in all haste and began to prepare for the sad business that had brought them there, while the drivers of the wagons looked upon their proceedings with an air of contempt for the whole affair.

The provisions consisted of whole roast pigs, decorated with ribbons and colored papers; fowls, salads, sweetmeats, fruits, rice brandy, cigars, etc., and when these had been placed upon the altars, as mentioned, the ceremonial rites commenced immediately by the participants firing revolvers, crackers, etc., and kindling fires of packages of colored papers. Profound bowing and kneeling over the graves accompanied everything, and the food and liquors were scattered around liberally.

"Sweet pertaters!" Broadway Billy exclaimed, as he and Skinny looked on. "If this don't jest peel th' onion, then I'm no jedger. It looks as though they's tryin' ter git up a sort o' local resurrection."

One of the Chinamen, one whom seemed to be much better dressed than any of the others, overheard, and turning to Billy and Skinny with his hands full of fruit, invited them to partake of the general feast.

As their mouths were already watering, and not wanting to offend by refusing, the lads did not hesitate to accept the invitation.

CHAPTER II.

IN A LIVELY SCRIMMAGE.

THE smoke and noise increased every moment.

The peculiarly clad Celestials pranced about like so many dancing dervishes, and the food and drink were soon broadcast, except the larger articles, which were reserved to be taken home again.

"Sweet pertaters!" Broadway Billy tried to exclaim, but his mouth was so full that he had to wait before saying more. As soon as the way was clear, however, he made another effort.

"Sweet pertaters! but this is jest th' greatest jubilee that I ever took a hand in!" he cried. "Skinny, is it possible that we are still in Yankee-land? or have we been spirited away inter some furren kentry where they don't know no better? I am in on th' good things jest th' same, though, an' I see that you ain't fur behind me. I begin ter believe that we didn't come all that five thousand eight hundred and odd miles fer nothin'. Whoop her up, 'Liza Jane! Git thar, Wun Lung! Go inter it, Sam Yam! Hustle, you merry mourners, hustle!"

The excitement was too much for Billy to keep still amidst, and he took off his hat and waved it wildly while he shouted as quoted.

"You'd best look out," Skinny cautioned, "or they will think you're makin' fun at 'em, an' they'll chew us up in no time. I think we'd better draw out."

"Draw out!" Billy cried; "nary a draw till I do my share at helpin' 'em celebrate. This is too good a snap ter let slip idly by. Oh, no, my gay an' festive fat partner, I'll hang on while th' goodies last, you bet! I've struck up acquaintance with th' Lord High Executioner, an' I'll see to it that you don't git hurt. You needn't fear, though, fer they might shoot at ye fer a week an' never hit ye, you're so thin. Whoop-hooray! Go inter it, pig-tails! If this is yer national Fourth o' July at home, you kin count on me every time! Whoop her up!"

Some of the heathen looked at him in a wondering way, and the drivers of the vehicles that had brought them there, or such of them, at least, as heard and saw him, had to laugh.

The well-dressed Chinaman, the one who had invited the lads to partake of the feast, stepped up to Billy again, this time with a little jug of liquor in hand.

"Melican boys vely much good time have," he said, in a pigeon English that simply set at defiance our best efforts to quote; "alle same maybe takee dlink saki.* Me Sam Foo Chow, alle same lep'snt Gleast Consulate Gen'lal."

This last was said with something of pride, and Billy had the good fortune to understand it immediately.

"What!" he cried, "you don't mean ter say that you represent th' great Chinese consulate-general! Give me yer hand, Sam, an' mighty glad ter make yer 'quaintance."

Billy held out his hand in a way that admitted of no refusal, and the Chinaman shook hands with him.

*Rice brandy.

Some of the others, who witnessed it, looked on in greatest amazement.

"You're a brick, you are, Sam!" Billy cried, as he shook Sam Foo Chow's hand vigorously, "an' I'd like ter drink to yer health, but I never drink at all, so you'll have ter excuse me. 'Low me ter interdoose my shadowy partner, Mr. Skinny. Skinny, do th' proper thing an' shake hands with Mr. Sam."

Skinny timidly put out his hand, and the silk-attired deputy-consulate, or whatever it is proper to call him, shook hands with him also.

As the lads had now a chance to take a better look at their heathen friend, they discovered that he was gotten up altogether regardless of expense. A massive gold chain was hanging from his neck, gorgeous and valuable rings were upon his fingers in plenty, and his garments were of the finest materials.

"Melican boys live in San F'lisco?" the Chinaman asked.

"Nary time," Billy answered. "We're from New York, Sam, an' we're proud of th' fack. Say, though, what is all this racket about?"

The Chinaman could understand English better than he could speak it, and he answered by explaining what was going on, though his explanation only partly enlightened his questioners.

"I thought it must be somethin' like that," Billy observed, not wanting to let on how little he had understood; "does yer people git taken this way often?"

"Ebelly lear," the Chinaman answered.

"Every year, eh? Now, that wouldn't suit me, Sam, if I was a Chinese; I'd want it once a month, at least."

The Chinaman smiled.

"What 'Melican boy's name is?" he asked.

"Want my name, eh? A feller wouldn't be of much 'count without one, would he, Sam. My name is Billy Weston, though at home they call me Broadway Billy, fer short."

A few more remarks were exchanged, and Sam Foo Chow turned away then to take part in the noisy ceremony once more.

Broadway Billy finished what he was eating, and then he, too, joined the dancers.

"Whoop!" he cried, catching up a package of crackers and setting fire to the fuse, "we may as well git th' worth of our money out of this, Skinny. Come on, my gay an' festive light-weight pard, an' show 'em how ter do th' shadder dance. Whoop! but this is jest immense!"

His crackers began to snap, and he swung them around his head and shouted and danced as loud and furious as the best of the seemingly crazy Chinaman.

Suddenly, right in the height of the frolic, shouts of warning were heard from some of the drivers who had brought the participants to the place, and the uproar suddenly ceased.

Billy and Skinny looked in the direction in which the drivers were pointing, and beheld a band of thirty or forty tramps, all armed with clubs, rushing down upon the Chinamen from behind some neighboring dunes.

"Sweet pertaters!" Billy cried, "but there is goin' ter be a fight, Skinny. Clew my mizzen spanker! but these tramps is goin' ter try ter drive off th' Chinee an' gobble up ther feast! Now is ther time ter crowd on all sail, pardner, an' let 'em see what we kin do!"

His sea voyage had given Billy quite a "tarry" vocabulary.

"D'ye mean ter run?" Skinny asked.

"Nary a run!" cried Billy.

"What then?"

"Fight."

"I didn't know that crowdin' on all sail meant fight," Skinny commented. "I took it that you was goin' ter show 'em a clean pair o' heels."

"You've growed smart as you've got thinner," responded Billy. "You know what I mean now, anyhow. We can't afford ter play mean on Sam, after th' white way he's treated us. We must take a hand in this racket, too. Heave to, now, an' prepare ter meet 'em fer here they are."

The tramps were right at hand, and the Chinamen, most of them badly scared, were huddling together like sheep.

The tramps were about the worst-looking specimens of their kind ever banded together. They were of many nationalities and of all ages. Down upon the Chinese they swooped, with yells that would have done credit to the same number of the wildest of Indians.

Sam Foo Chow was near to where Billy and Skinny were standing at the moment, and after shouting some directions to his countrymen, he turned to Billy and said:

"'Melican boys run; big fight, maybe gitee much hurt."

"Nixey McGinnis!" cried Billy; "we'll stand

to yer back till yer belly caves in, Sammy, old boy, an' don't ye fergit it! We ain't built on th' runnin' plan, leastwise I ain't; an' as fer Skinny, he's so thin that they won't find him. Look out, now, fer here they be!"

There they were, sure enough, and many a Chinaman went down under their heavy clubs at the first meeting.

The Chinamen had revolvers, it is true, but they had only blank cartridges.

None of the drivers of the vehicles that had brought the Chinamen to the place offered any help, most of them having sudden calls to attend to their horses, so the Chinamen were left to face the music alone.

They used their revolvers, but the tramps cared nothing for them, and for a few moments it looked as though the tramps would have an easy victory.

The Chinese greatly outnumbered the tramps, but the latter had the advantage, their clubs more than making up for deficiency in numbers.

"Go fer 'em, pig-tails!" cried Broadway Billy, as he did not hesitate about jumping right into the *melee*; "don't be afeerd of th' dirty critters! Close right in on 'em an' do 'em up! Here, you flat-nosed gosling! lend me that stick!"

This was said to one of the attacking party, a fellow who was about to deal the spirited boy a blow on the head, and with a sudden spring Billy lighted upon him and wrested the club out of his grasp.

"Thus armed, he 'waded' right in, and more than one of the tramps went down under his heavy and well-aimed blows.

Skinny held back, not being strong enough for such work, and Sam Foo Chow, who had some military knowledge, shouted directions to his countrymen, at the same time taking an active part in the fight himself.

As soon as the first shock of the surprise and attack had passed, the Chinamen made haste to arm themselves with pickets from the nearest fence, and then the fight became hot and heavy.

As it progressed, the combatants got separated into little groups or knots, where the warfare was carried on till one side or the other had to yield and run, to begin anew at some other point.

Billy presently found himself in one of these groups, with four Chinamen as his backers—or he as theirs, while their opponents numbered seven.

Taking in the situation, Billy put forth every effort. He was fighting in defense of the altar upon which Sam Foo Chow had laid his gifts, which was one of the best supplied of all.

"Sock it to 'em!" he yelled, as he plied his club in a lively manner; "give 'em rats! Sweet pertaters! but this is a lively scrimmage! Pelt it to 'em, Johns, an' show 'em no quarter! Whoop! there they go, licked fair an' square!"

The seven had taken sudden flight, and, just as they did so, Billy heard some one cry out:

"Hi! hi! 'Melican boy helpee me!"

Wheeling quickly around, Billy saw Sam Foo Chow in the hands of three tramps, at quite a distance from the heart of the fight, and they were trying to rob him of his chain and rings.

At them the street scout rushed, his club ready for active business, and as soon as he came to the spot where his help was needed he sent one of the tramps spinning end over end. But, the other two were determined fellows, powerful of build, and one of them turned to meet the Broadway expert, while the other still struggled with Sam Foo Chow. Billy aimed another blow, but this time it was dodged, and the next moment he found himself in the tramp's bear-like embrace.

CHAPTER III.

RETURNING IN STATE.

It was a critical moment.

Billy had to let fall his club and grapple with the man who had hold of him, and it looked as though both Billy and Sam Foo Chow would get worsted.

Suddenly, though, another person took a hand in the game, and it was none other than Skinny. He had been keeping his eyes on Billy, and the instant he saw his partner in serious trouble he was ready to lend what help he could.

His help in this instance was worth everything. It turned the tide of battle. Rushing forward, he picked up the club Billy had just dropped, and swinging it once over his head, brought it down with terrific force upon the back of Billy's antagonist, causing him to break his hold and drop to the ground with a groan.

As soon as Billy was free, both he and Skinny ran to the help of Sam Foo Chow, who was now faring badly. His adversary had him down,

with a knee upon his breast, and was just about robbing him.

"Let up, there!" shouted Billy, "or it will be the worse for you. Let up, I say, you walking pest house, or I'll knock yer head clear over inter th' sea! Can't hear, eh? Well, take that, then!"

Catching up the club the tramp himself had used, he dealt the fellow a blow on the head that rolled him over senseless, in short order.

As soon as that was done he helped the Chinaman to arise.

"You are better'n a dozen dead men yet, Sam," he declared. "Glad he didn't git off with yer vally'bles. We'll give 'em fits afore we're done with 'em. Whoop! At 'em, ye pig-tailed Sons o' Sundown, ye! Make 'em think th' day o' reckonin' has come! Over ye go!" knocking another end over end; "an' now who's th' next? Don't all speak at once, but step right up and take yer rations."

The fight did not last much longer.

Already the side of the tramps was weakening, for as fast as any of these could lay hands upon a pig, a fowl, or a jug of *saki*, he would grab his prize and run, leaving the others to fare the best they could.

Finally the Chinamen made a grand charge, and the whole band was put to flight, the fighting after that being among themselves over the prizes which a few of them had managed to lay hold of.

"That's ther way ter do it!" cried Broadway Billy; "that's ther way ter make 'em sick! Sam, you are a whooper in a fight, you are, and I like you. Let's shake again!"

Billy held out his hand to Sam Foo Chow as he said this, and the Chinaman grasped it warmly.

"'Melican boy *muchee* blave!" he exclaimed. "Fightee like debil! Him save Sam Foo Chow him's life; allee same save him chain and lings. Sam Foo Chow neber floget allee same."

"Thank'e fer that, Sam," Billy returned, "but you don't want ter fergit Skinny, here. Only fer him I guess both of us would 'a' been gone goslings. He's so thin that ye wouldn't think it, but he is as brave as a lion when occasion requires it of him."

"Yes, allee same so," the Chinaman agreed; "me see him bleak big tlampl him's back with club. Blave boy, allee same sick no mattee."

He shook hands again with Skinny.

"He ain't as sick as he looks," Billy explained. "That is his nat'ral degree o' fatness. Can't git him no fatter nohow. Ye see he has a mighty big appetite, an' he eats so much that it makes him thin ter carry it around."

The Chinaman grinned, and saying something in response, turned away to conclude the ceremonies of the occasion.

"Sweet pertaters!" Billy exclaimed, "we've tumbled right inter excitement, Skinny, without lookin' fer it at all. It seems strange, but I must be a mascot of th' onlucky sort, for no matter where I go it seems ter be the signal fer some sort o' ruction ter foller. How d'ye feel after th' battle?"

"Oh, I'm all right," Skinny averred; "I didn't take any hand in it till I seen you was gittin' inter a tight place, an' then I thought it was time fer me ter do somethin'."

"You done jest right. You was reservin' your strength fer jest that 'casion. I'm powerful 'bliged to ye, pardner, as I'll have ter prove to ye some time. Now I opine that we'd better be gettin' back ter th' city."

"Yes, I guess we had. Let's be goin', fer if th' tramps come back with a bigger force we may git th' worst of it next time."

"Right ye are, heavy-weight pard; but, here comes Sam Chow-Chow, or whatever his name is; let's see what he wants."

They tarried, and Sam Foo Chow approached them and said:

"Sam Foo Chow him goin' to city back allee same now. 'Melican boys go lide with him allee same?"

"Well, now, Sam, that is a properzishum worth considerin'," Billy exclaimed heartily. "What d'ye think about it, Skinny? Which is your turn-out, Sam?"

"Open calliage down by load," the Chinamen answered, pointing to an open barouche and team of white horses, and not without some show of pride.

"Count us in every time!" Billy exclaimed, speaking for himself and Skinny. "I never like ter refuse ter grant small favors of this sort, Sam. You kin have the honor of our company, an' welcome to it. Come along, Skinny; ye know yer mom said you was ter be guided by me in all things, an' this is somethin' that ye mustn't miss. Ye needn't be at all

afeerd o' drawin' too much 'tention, fer folks won't be able ter see ye from th' sidewalks, so awful thin you've got."

Sam Foo Chow listened to this in an amused way, and started toward his carriage, the boys following him.

"You have too much ter say, Billy," Skinny complained as they walked down the sandy slope; "you'll be gittin' inter trouble th' first you know."

"It wouldn't s'prise me a bit if I did, Skinny," Billy owned. "Somehow, I feel trouble in my bones. Don't you be alarmed, though, fer it will have ter be awful close-wove trouble that could hurt you."

"You want ter remember that you ain't in New York," Skinny cautioned, "an' that folks don't know ye here as they do there. You've got no friends ter call on ter help ye out o' scrapes."

"That's a cold fack, Skinny, an' about the truest truth you ever uttered, and I'll keep yer advice in mind—if I kin. But here we be at Mr. Sam's gorgeous turnout. Whew! but we'll ride back ter town in state."

Their new-made friend invited them to get in, and when they had done so he got in after them and settled himself upon the back seat, telling the driver to go ahead.

The team was a good one, and the open carriage went whirling away toward the city at good speed.

"How likee it?" the Chinaman asked.

"Bully!" cried Billy; "an' you are a boss. If you ever come ter New York, you see ef we don't do th' white thing by you. We'll have th' Fire Department turn out an' escort ye 'round Paradise Park, to th' tune of th' Conquerin' Hero; hey, Skinny?"

"That's what we will," Skinny agreed.

"Melican boys vely much good fellals," Sam Foo Chow exclaimed. "Me likee you vely much."

"Glad ter hear ye say so," cried Billy. "It shows yer good judgment, an' yer power o' discrimination. Some folks can't tell real diamonds from paste, but it is plain ter be seen that you ain't one o' them. You have got hold o' real gems this time, Sammy, an' that's a fack. Skinny don't quite come up ter size an' weight, but he makes up fer it in purity and goodness. He hasn't a flaw, exceptin' that two o' his back teeth is gone."

"Say, you want ter let up," Skinny protested.

"Pardon me, Skinny, I know jest how retirin' you are in disperzishun, an' I'll try ter be as considerate o' yer feelin's as I kin. Somebody has got ter boast of yer good p'int, though, fer you won't never do it, an' strangers wouldn't find 'em out in a thousand years, so I take it upon myself ter blow yer trumpet as well as my own. See?"

"I see that th' sooner we git back to New York th' sooner we'll be out o' danger o' gittin' inter a loonytick 'sylum, fer you'll keep on—"

"Yes, I know," Billy interrupted; "I mentioned that p'int to yer mom afore we started, but she allowed that if I done most o' th' talkin' I might be able ter git ye home ag'in all right, so—"

"Oh! you shut up!"

"Couldn't do it if I tried, Skinny, an' you know that. But, I was about ter return Mr. Sam's compliment when you put in your lip. Please don't do it no more, my gay an' festive pard. Yes, Sam," turning to the Chinaman, "I am mighty glad ter know that you fully 'preciate th' honor that we have conferred upon ye, an' I kin say that we like you pooty well in return. You seem ter be a decent sort o' feller, an' I'm glad we've met ye."

Sam Foo Chow had allowed a smile to play over his face all the time Billy was talking, as though he understood well and appreciated everything, as perhaps he did.

"Melican boy vely much good fellal," he said again. "Me much likee havee 'Melican boys go home allee same Sam Foo Chow, see Gleast Consulate Gen'lal."

"Sweet pertaters!" cried Billy, "that is jest what I was goin' ter propose myself. Nothin' would suit us better, and I'm sure his Royal Highness would be tickled 'most ter death ter see us. We'll go, Sammy, old feller, so that is settled."

"All right; Sam Foo Chow he likee that."

The carriage rattled on, and so did Billy's tongue, and in due time the two lads were back again in the city.

The carriage headed for the Chinese quarter, Broadway Billy taking off his cap and bowing here and there to the wondering crowds, much to the displeasure of the more retiring Skinny, and to the amusement of the Chinamen.

Finally the carriage turned into Clay street, where the pace of the team was slackened as they toiled up the steep hill for a distance, and presently the driver drew up in front of a house on which was flying an ensign consisting of a blue and crimson dragon rampant upon a field of orange.

"This Gleast Consulate-Gen'lal him's house," Sam Foo Chow informed, as he proceeded to get out; and the two boys followed him.

Dismissing the carriage with a wave of his hand, the Chinaman led the way into the house, which was in no degree a palace, but only an ordinary dwelling.

Going up-stairs, he threw open a door, and invited the lads to step within, saying:

"Melican boys wait; Sam Foo Chow him come back."

"All right, Sammy," said Billy, and he and Skinny entered, and the Chinaman closed the door.

"Sweet pertaters!" Billy cried, as he looked around the apartment, "is this real life, Skinny, or is it a sort o' 'Rabian Night dream? Hang me if I know. Brace up, now, Fatty, an' have some style about ye, fer Sammy has gone ter fetch th' Great Mogul, an' we must 'pear at our best. Draw in plenty of wind, Skinny, an' inflate yer clothes as much as ye kin, so's he'll be able ter see ye when he comes."

CHAPTER IV.

A WOMAN'S SCREAM.

THE room into which the two lads had been shown was, in its way, quite gorgeous.

It was decorated with carved work, was heavily gilded, and was hung with a good deal of scarlet and orange. It had, besides, teak-wood tables and stools, and screens, lanterns, etc., in abundance.

One of the tables had a white cloth over it, and held some finely painted china which went to suggest that this was the dining-room of the great personage whom the boys were to have the honor of meeting.

In a little time Sam Foo Chow returned, and he now invited his guests to follow him to yet another room.

They were conducted along the hall to the front, and shown into a room that fairly eclipsed the other for splendor.

Two broad windows opened upon a balcony, and they were hung with crimson and gold. Between them, on what was no doubt meant to be a chair of state, sat the Consulate, a plainly dressed servant on each side of him.

The Consulate was a slightly fat individual of forty-five or fifty, clad in the finest of blue and purple silks, and was evidently trying to look as dignified as he could, though he carried it to the extreme and was blinking as solemnly as an owl. At his right, in front of the servant on that side, stood another Chinaman in semi-American dress, who soon proved to be the official interpreter.

Sam Foo Chow bowed low as he approached, Broadway Billy doing the same, and Skinny, taking pattern after Billy, following suit.

As soon as that was done, Sam Foo Chow said something in his own language to the Consulate, waved his hand toward the boys, and stepped back as though he had no further part in the proceedings.

The Consulate then said something in a slow, sing-song way, and as soon as he closed his lips, the man at his right began to repeat his words in English.

"The Gleast Consulate Gen'lal extends his best respects," he began, in fairly good English, "and thanks the 'Melican boys for the service they have lended to Sam Foo Chow. He asks their names, and where they are from."

"He can't talk English, then?" Billy questioned.

This was immediately repeated in Chinese to the Consulate, thus proving to Billy that whatever he might say would be similarly translated, provided the interpreter was equal to the occasion; and when the great man in the chair said something in answer, the interpreter passed it along to Billy.

"He informs you that I am his ears and tongue," he said.

"That bein' the case," commented Billy, "I'll have ter make th' best I can of th' situation. Hate like fun ter give an' receive news second-hand, though, but it seems it can't be helped. Well, jest return our best respects to His Royal Highness, an' tell him that we are powerful glad ter see him lookin' so well, an' that if he has no objections we'll shake hands with him. Nothin' has been said about our stayin' ter tea, but we'll do him that honor, too, while we're

about it. Nothin' mean about us. Our names, by th' way, are Broadway Billy, an' Skinny, my pard; an' we're from th' big town of New York. Tell him no need ter mention th' little service we have rendered to his right bower. There, that's about all you can handle at one dose, I guess."

The interpreter stood aghast at this flow of words, and it was not until the Consulate turned an inquiring look upon him that he ventured to translate.

What he said the boys never knew, but it was probable that he conveyed the gist of Billy's remarks to the official ears.

The response of the Consulate was at length.

"I am glad to know two such brave boys," the interpreter said, as though he were speaking for himself. "You have saved the glove of my dear son from being disgraced. I thank you both vely much, and will shake hands with you. You shall take tea with me. Sam Foo Chow has informed me of your blavery, in fighting in defense of the glove of my son, and of your lescue of him from being lobbed of his watch and his lings, if not leally saving his life, and if I can show you any mark of my legard for such conduct, let me know in how way."

"There!" cried Billy, as he stepped forward and held out his hand to the Consulate, "that is what I call real white, and it proves that you Chinee ain't so bad after all. I like to shake such a hand as yours, old feller," shaking it with all vigor, "an' no doubt you'll say th' same of mine." "Skinny," turning to him, "step up an' do th' honorable," and he made way for his thin partner, who came forward and gave his hand timidly. "As ter ther bein' anything you kin do fer us, Noble Duke," Billy rattled right on, "there's nothin' I kin think of at short notice. If anything comes ter my mind later on, I'll make haste ter let ye know about it. Now, what about that tea you mentioned? We're ready to sample that."

Sam Foo Chow and the interpreter looked both frightened and amused at the boy's audacity, but the Consulate and the two servants, who understood never a word, looked on blankly.

The interpreter repeated the main part of Billy's remarks, and after several questions had been answered to the satisfaction of the Consulate, he gave some directions to the servant at his right, who immediately left the room. Further instruction was given to the servant at the left, then, who set about spreading a cloth upon a table on the balcony, and placing cups for the Consulate and his guests.

In a little time tea was served, and Billy and Skinny, seated opposite to their host, proceeded to imbibe.

Billy's tongue rattled away at a rate that set the interpreter at defiance, and frequently made Skinny go off into uncontrollable fits of laughing, which caused the Consulate to look upon him in some surprise.

"Ye mustn't mind Skinny, old boss," Billy explained, when Skinny went off into one of his heartiest laughs, "fer he has spells that way whenever he takes tea. Ye see, he hasn't much covérin' to his nerves, an' th' tea takes holt quick an' sharp. He'll come out all right. Tell him his tea is superfine," turning to the interpreter, who stood behind him; "it goes right home. Never tackled it in sich small doses as this, afore, though. Sweet pertaters! but one of mom's cups would hold as much as six of these. No matter, it's good, jest th' same. Drink her down, Skinny, fer this is probably th' first an' last occasion of this sort of our lives. Nothin' like makin' sun while th' hay shines, ye know. Here, John," to one of the servants, "fill her up again."

When the tea-urn was finally emptied the *soiree* came to an end, and the Consulate rose and led the way back into the room, where he took his former place on the chair between the windows.

Billy and Skinny remained on the balcony for a moment to take a look at the scene that lay spread out below them. They could look down upon the greater portion of the city, and upon the bay and its surroundings. Of course neighboring buildings shut out a good deal from view, but the scene was well worth the moment they gave to it.

Just as they were turning away, a woman's piercing scream was heard in the street below.

"Sweet pertaters!" Billy instantly exclaimed, "there's a diffikilty o' some sort, Skinny, sure's ye're born!"

Both leaned over the balcony rail to learn what the "diffikilty" was.

On the opposite side of the street, just a little further down, stood a carriage, one of the closed sort, and two men were just carrying a

woman into the house before which the carriage had stopped.

They, the boys, were just in time to see this much, and the next moment the door closed after the men and their burden.

Just then, too, Sam Foo Chow reminded them that their host was waiting to take formal leave of them.

The lads returned to the room, their friend motioned them to take their places in front of the seated dignitary, and they did so.

The Consulate addressed them briefly, handed something to his interpreter, and when he had done, the interpreter said:

"In taking leave of you, the Gleast Consulate desires to give you something as a token of his esteem, and to reward you for the service you have rendered him. He gives to you this ling," extending a ring to Broadway Billy, "and hopes you will wear it to remember this occasion. If he can ever do any favor for you, he bids you to come and make it known to him. With this he bids you good-by."

"Accept my hearty thanks, Noble Sachem," Billy responded, speaking direct to the Consulate, and putting on the ring as he did so; "I will wear th' ring as you request, an' I only wish that I had somethin' worth givin' you in return. You are a big chief, you are, an' you deserve ter live long an' be happy. I'm talkin' fer myself an' Skinny too, fer he is rather bashful. I 'low it's owin' ter his thinness. If you ever come out ter New York, don't fail ter call on us."

With that he made his final salam, Skinny taking pattern as before and doing the same, and as soon as the interpreter had passed the remarks over to the Consulate and the latter had waved his adieu, Sam Foo Chow led the way from the room.

"Melican boys been received bas with gleatest honor. Not many mans come see Gleast Consulate receive honor so gleat allee same. 'Melican boy him keep ling, it be respected allee same Chinaman by; makee 'Melican boy muchee friends."

"Sweet pertaters! is that th' fack?" cried Billy. "It is a sort of signet that'll be respected by yer feller pig-tails on sight, eh? meanin' no disrespect. If that is th' case, you kin bet that I'll hang on ter it like grim death ter a defunct son of Africa. Well, here's my hand, Sammy, old boy, seein' that we must part. I hate ter tear myself away, but th' best o' friends must part. By th' way, which is th' nearest cut to th' Hotel?"

"Melican boys don't know way hotel to?" their Celestial friend interrogated; "allee same me send Chinaman show."

As it was by this time beginning to grow dark, Billy availed himself of the offer, and a servant was sent to pilot them to their hotel.

"Sweet pertaters! Skinny, but that was real white!" Billy had to exclaim as they set out. "Who would 'a' dreamed that we'd fall inter sich a snap? I begin ter believe that this trip of ours is bound ter mark th' red-letter days of our lives. I do, Skinny, fer a fack. What with th' pleasures of th' voyage, an' almost learnin' ter be first-class sailors— But, there, I won't say another word about that on your account. This is openin' immense, though, an' if we don't jest make Rome howl afore New York sees us ag'in, it will be 'cause it ain't in us."

"Don't your jaws never git tired?" Skinny naively asked.

"Never knowed 'em ter git tired, did ye?" Billy demanded. "Fack is, Skinny, if I didn't talk there wouldn't be anything said. You're no talker."

"I have never had a fair chance," the thin partner declared.

"Never had a fair chance; how's that?"

"You've allus got th' floor."

"Shake!" Billy cried; "that's one on me. I own up ter th' corn, Skinny. I will give ye a chance now, though. I won't say another word till we reach th' hotel, an' you kin fire right ahead. Hold on, though," with a sudden recollection, "I'd like ter know what that scream meant that we heard, an' what that woman was bein' taken inter that house fer ag'in' her will. That is somethin' that I feel called upon ter investigate, Skinny. There may be a p'izen diffikilty—"

But, altogether forgetful of the promise he had made, he rattled right on till they arrived at their hotel, not giving Skinny any chance to talk at all.

CHAPTER V.

THE BROADWAY BILLY OF OLD.

The hotel at which Billy and Skinny had registered was not one of the great, first-class

order, like the boasted Palace Hotel on Market street.

It was only a small, "one-horse" affair, in comparison, but it was respectable, and it was located in a respectable neighborhood. It was plain and substantial, and its prices were not "fancy."

By the time they reached there, as mentioned at the close of the previous chapter, it was dark, and after dismissing their guide they hastened to their room to prepare for supper.

A thorough washing and combing made them ready, and in due course of time the evening meal had been disposed of.

This hotel was run on the good, old-fashioned American plan, and as they came forth from the dining-room, where Billy had made things lively during the course of the meal, and had gained a score of new friends, Skinny asked:

"Well, and what now?"

"You ask that as though you are ready fer anything that happens ter turn up," Billy commented.

"And so I am," Skinny assured. "No knowin' what will turn up, either, an' it is jest as likely ter be th' hangman as not, fer by th' way you are goin' it you are bound ter come ter some bad end."

Billy laughed heartily.

"Do you think it is as bad as that?" he asked.

"I certainly do," Skinny declared. "You was bad enough at home, but here you seem ter have jest let yerself loose. There is no holdin' ye at all. I wouldn't dare ter talk up ter folks like you do, an' you'll keep on till ye git inter trouble by it, you see if ye don't."

"Jest as like as not," Billy agreed. "It wouldn't s'prise me a bit. It is somethin' that I can't help, though, no more'n I kin help eatin'. Think of th' weeks that I was shut up on that ship—"

"An' you had every sailor as crazy as a bed-bug all th' time," Skinny interrupted.

"Their fault, not mine, my gay an' festive pard. It is bound ter come out somehow, an' it is best ter let it have its own course, like a case o' measles. Ye see I have no business cares on my mind now, an' am free as th' wind. But, come, let's go up ter our room, fer I have got an idee in mind."

"I hope it ain't th' fever-a-gittin' holt of ye ag'in."

"Th' detective fever, ye mean, Skinny?"

"Yes."

"Well, that's jest what it is. I felt it th' minnit that I heard that woman scream while we was up there takin' tea with old Ko-Ko, or whatever his name is. It is growin' worse all th' time, an' I know it's bound ter have its run, jest th' same as my tongue is when it gits started. Can't stop it nohow."

"I wish we was back in New York."

Skinny appeared really distressed over the prospect of Billy's setting out to hunt up adventure, and he felt greatly concerned, not knowing what dangers his partner might run into.

Billy laughed at him.

"You don't want ter let sich fancies trouble yer brain, my gay an' festive pard," he remonstrated. "Brain trouble is bound ter reduce th' flesh, Skinny, an' if you git any thinner than ye are I don't know what I'll do ter keep track of ye. But, come up to th' room an' hear what my idee is."

"I wish ye was so tired out that you'd be glad ter crawl inter bed at sight of it," Skinny observed, regretfully.

"All of which I ain't."

Billy led the way to their room, and when they were within, and the door had been closed, he proceeded to unfold his idea.

"Skinny," he began, "this year is about th' last one of boyhood that you an' me will ever see. Truth ter tell, we are past that interestin' period now, but we kin still play off fer boys of fifteen if we want ter; leastwise I kin. These facks bein' th' case, I mean ter git all the fun out of th' fleetin' moments that I kin. I'm goin' ter crowd one string o' fun an' adventure clear from here to New York, an' sich a big string, too, that I'll remember this trip to my dyin' day. You'll be foolish if you don't do th' same. See what a royal beginnin' we have made a'ready."

"What have ye got in mind, anyhow?" Skinny asked.

"Skinny, jest prick up yer ears an' I'll unfold a tale that will make ye smole a smile that will add a whole ounce ter yer weight. I reckon you've taken notice of th' sort o' bootblacks that they have here. In fack I know ye have, fer it was you that called my 'tention to 'em first. They ain't free-an'-easy little chaps like we have in New York, but are men, all wearin' uniforms, with their rows of easy chairs set up

on platforms under canvas awnings. Why, th' sight of 'em would 'a' made you an' me turn green with envy, when we was knights of th' box an' brush. They are got up to th' queen's taste, an' I reckon they would make it hot for any boy that dared ter set up opperisition to 'em in the good old way. D'ye begin ter see my idee?"

"I'm afraid I do," Skinny admitted.

"Afraid ye do, fat pardner? What d'ye mean by that? I was in hopes that you'd kick up yer heels an' dance th' shadder-dance fer joy, an' declare that you was with me in th' racket. 'Fraid I'll never be able ter make anything out of you, Skinny, unless I start a dime museum an' set ye down on th' bills as the livin' skeleton. But, I am wanderin' from th' subjeck. In that trunk there is my old bootblack kit, an' my old bootblack clothes. I'm goin' ter don 'em, as they say in love stories, an' I'm goin' out ter paint this town red. Will ye join me?"

"No, I won't!" Skinny declared. "I won't have anything ter do with sich business as that. If you want ter run th' risk of gittin' inter th' lock-up, don't think that I do, too."

"Thank ye fer yer frankness, Thinny; that allus was one good trait in yer character. I'm sorry that your Puritan idees debar ye from enjoyin' a good slice o' fun when it's set afore ye, though. Well, if ye won't ye won't, an' I ain't goin' ter waste no vally'ble time coaxin' ye. I'll proceed ter don as aforesaid."

With that Billy unlocked his trunk and took out the things he required.

There was his old box, with "BROADWAY BILLY" on its side in bright, brass-head tacks, and his old bootblack clothes, even to an old cap and a pair of old, loose-fitting shoes.

Throwing off the clothes he had been wearing, he put on these, and the transformation wrought was wonderful.

There stood the Broadway Billy of old, the original and unique bootblack bravo of our first story of this series.

As this suit had originally been too big for him, it about fitted him now, and he surveyed himself in the glass with something of pride.

"Sweet pertaters!" he exclaimed, "but this jest scoops th' pie, plate an' all! Here I be, Skinny, th' same old Billy of old, an' hang my stockin', if I kin see that I am a day older. Th' only thing out o' place is that my face is too clean, but I kin soon fix that. There," after taking a dirty rag from his box and wiping his face with it, "that improves my 'plexion' siderably. Ha, ha, ha! but I see a bushel o' fun ahead, Skinny, an' I only wish you'd join me an' share it."

"Th' only thing that I kin see ahead fer you, is a bed on th' stone floor of th' lock-up," Skinny dolefully prophesied.

"You'd wind a wet blanket around my fondest dreams, if I'd let ye do it, ye pin-legged wasp; but I won't let ye do it, an' that settles it. Sweet pertaters! but this takes me back ter old times, this does, an' I feel as happy as a clam. Won't I jest make this town open its eyes when I sally out! But what are you goin' ter do, my shadowy pard? Be ye goin' ter stay here?"

"No," Skinny answered, "fer if you really mean ter go out, I'll go along an' see some of this fun that you promise."

"Ha! that's th' ticket, pard! Put it there! I'll give ye th' worth of yer money, or me name is Mud. Now, let's see, am I ready ter sally? Yes, I guess so, so turn out th' gas an' come along."

Skinny did as directed, and they left the room and descended to the bar-room and office.

"Shine 'em up!" cried Billy, as he advanced with a business-like air; "make 'em rival the full moon. Anybody have a shine? Put on a reg'lar New York coat o' patent-leather, an' it'll cost ye only th' small trifle of a nickel. Speak up, gentlemen, but not all at once, an' I'll make ye so proud o' yer foundations that ye won't want ter walk on 'em. Shine 'em up!"

This was something entirely new and novel, and all eyes were turned upon the boy immediately.

The night clerk, who had just come on duty, looked on speechless with amazement.

"What's th' matter?" Billy demanded, as he looked around coolly; "did anybody say anything?"

At first no one had recognized him, but now some of those whom he had amused at supper saw who he was, and lively remarks were made, to all of which Billy responded briskly and wittily.

"See here," the night-clerk presently demanded, "who are you, anyhow?"

"Who am I?" Billy repeated, turning to him; "why, I am Broadway Billy, late from New

York. I'm a perfesser o' bootblackin'. You'll find my name there on yer register, an' ye needn't put on specks ter see it, either."

"What! do you mean to say that you are registered here?"

"That's what I do," Billy assured. "Take a look, an' you'll find it set down thusly: 'William Weston (Broadway Billy), New York.'"

The clerk did look, and satisfied himself.

"As I am in somethin' of a hurry," Billy then proceeded to explain, "I'll enlighten ye a leetle upon th' subject. I used ter be a bootblack in New York, once upon a time—as goody-goody stories begin, an' I have brought my traps along with me ter have some fun. I'm goin' out ter stir up th' citizens a little. This gentleman on my right—look close, please—is my pardner. He has declined ter join me in my racket, an' mebbly he'll be back by bedtime ter go ter roost. In case ye hear a thin, small voice about that time, jest put on yer specks an' see if it ain't Skinny. If it is, please put him ter bed with care, an' be sure ter plug up th' keyhole so's he won't 'vaporate afore mornin'. I have a deal o' trouble with him, owin' ter his thinness, an' so I have ter make these requests."

A roar of laughter greeted this, and Skinny felt considerably mean; but as soon as he could be heard, he put in:

"Yes, Mr. Clerk, an' if Billy comes in afore I do, don't let him have any light in th' room, please."

Billy, and all the others, looked at him in a questioning way.

"Why not?" the clerk asked.

"'Cause he's so full o' gas that he's likely ter 'splode an' blow up th' hull 'stablishment.'"

This won another round of applause, and after a few minutes the two lads went out into the street, when, by mutual agreement, they pretended not to know each other.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DETECTIVE FEVER BREAKS OUT.

The two lads soon found themselves out upon Montgomery street.

In the distance, at the end of the street in that direction, stood the mammoth Palace Hotel, looming up nine stories in height, and ablaze with lights.

Billy had noticed this building during their afternoon stroll, and had at the time mentally decided that he would "take it in" in the evening. He headed in that direction now.

This hotel is, indeed, a massive affair, made of iron and brick, and is one of the landmarks to which boasted San Franciscans point with pride. It is adorned with an almost overabundance of bay-windows, and is sure to attract the attention of visiting strangers.

Broadway Billy having fully decided that he was going there, stepped out at a brisk pace.

He was soon there, and whistling merrily, walked boldly in.

Skinny followed at a safe distance, filled with awe at the grandeur of the place, and at his partner's audacity.

Billy went right ahead, with a swinging stride, down the grand corridor and out into the glass-covered court which occupies the interior. As he entered that almost fairy-like precinct, though, he involuntarily stopped whistling and looked around upon the scene of splendor that burst upon him.

A band was playing, and the electric lights, striking upon the many tiers of whitest columns, made it seem like some Parisian dream. All around were flowers, people were seated here and there in chairs, and carriages were standing in the circular paved driveway. Above, the guests of the house were seen promenading in the galleries, and looking down over the balustrades at the scene below.

"Sweet pertaters!" Billy exclaimed, "but I guess I have been spirited away on some gilt-edge Alhambra! This takes th' plum right out o' th' center of th' cake, sure pop. Shiver my timbers and stand me on my beams' ends! but this is a sight that might make Solomon of old shed salt, sad tears. Whew! but I fess that I feel jest a little out o' place, in spite o' my brass-bound cheek. Skinny, where be ye?"

Skinny was standing at a little distance away, his eyes and mouth open wide. At the mention of his name, he looked at Billy, but he did not seem inclined to recognize him.

"This yanks ther tart, don't it, my gay an' festive pard," cried Billy. "I know we wasn't ter speak, but I couldn't help it."

Skinny drew a little nearer, saying:

"Billy, fer goodness' sake let's git out o' here. I'm 'shamed of ye, an' I must own up to it. Folks is lookin' at ye a'ready, an' th' first ye know they'll run ye in."

"Nary a git!" Billy cried: "that would sp'ile all th' fun. If you are narvous an' uneasy, though, jest draw 'way from me, so's folks won't take ye fer my shadder. If you're 'shamed o' me, so am I o' you; fer I'd be 'shamed ter own sich a sick-lookin' shadder as you are. Take care not ter git too close to th' music, though, or the sound-waves may annihilate ye. Ta-ta."

With that parting shot, Billy started around the driveway.

He had not gone far when he stopped short with an exclamation of surprise and interest.

"Sweet pertaters! but I know that outfit," he cried in a low tone, looking at a carriage and team that were standing at the edge of the drive; "it is th' same one that I seen this afternoon down there by the old Mikado's house, th' one that had that woman aboard that let th' blood-curdlin' yell out of her. I had fergot that case fer th' time, but this brings it all back ter mind."

Billy was right, it was the same rig.

"I must have Skinny's opine on this," he muttered. "I'll jest ax him if he thinks he'd know that turn-out if he's ter see it."

Going on around, he presently came to where Skinny was standing, and while pretending not to be noticing him, asked:

"Skinny, would ye know that team an' carriage ag'in that we seen this afternoon down there by old Hong-Kong's house; th' one that that woman that screamed was taken out of?"

"I guess I would," Skinny ventured.

"Well, jest stalk around there an' see if it is on this driveway, will ye! I feel th' fever comin' on worse 'n ever."

Skinny looked at his partner in a despairing way, but started to do as requested.

"Yes," he said when he returned, "th' same rig stands around there on th' side of th' drive."

"How d'ye know it's th' same one?"

"I know by th' hosses, fer one reason; an' by th' new curtains on th' carriage fer another."

"Kerrect! Skinny, you have a degree o' penetration that will take ye ter Congress, or th' Penitentiary, one o' these days."

"I'll have company, if it's th' last-named place."

Just then a heavy hand fell upon Billy's shoulder.

Looking quickly up, the lad found himself in the grasp of a powerfully-built descendant of Ham.

"Sweet pertaters!" Billy cried, "what's th' matter, Sambo? Have ye got th' cramps in yer hands? If ye have, jest let up on my shoulder an' tackle somethin' that ain't got no feelin's."

"What yo' doin' heah, beggar?" the colored gentleman demanded.

"Jest let up on yer squeeze a little," answered Billy, "an' I'll enlighten ye on th' p'int in question."

"You want ter know who you'm talkin' to," the darky growled, "an' my name ain't no Sambo, nuther. Now you jes' hustle out ob heah, or I'll have ye 'rested an' turned over."

"Sweet pertaters! but that would be bad! Ter be 'rested would be a calamity o' stoopenjus magnitood, George Abraham Jackson Andrew Lincoln Washington; but ter be turned over besides would be worse than transcendently horrible. I hope you won't be so cruel to a poor orphing what never had but one father an' mother, and that didn't cut its first tooth till it was four months old. Can't you let me down a little easier than that, Benjamin Henry Patrick Franklin Jefferson Thomas Fifteenth-Amendment Jones?"

The colored gentleman's grasp relaxed, and he looked at Billy in open-mouthed amazement. Skinny was standing a little distance off, grinning from ear to ear, and a party of three or four gentlemen who were seated near enough to overhear, burst into a hearty laugh.

"Look heah, you low-down specimen o' white trash, yo'!" the darky cried, as soon as he could speak, "I's a notion ter wring yer neck. My name am Dan'l Webster, an' nothin' else. Now you hustle out ob heah, quick!"

His grasp tightened again, and he made a start for the rear entrance, with Billy in tow.

"It serves him right!" Skinny mentally commented, as he looked on with some satisfaction; "mebbly it will take some of th' freshness out of him."

"Good-by, Skinny!" Billy called out; "I'll say hello now, in case I don't never see ye ag'in. Darkness has overpowered me, an' it looks as if I'm in fer it. I'll meet ye in th' sweet by-an'-by, if not sooner; an' in th' mean time you had better amble back ter our dug-out an' go ter bed, fer most likely I won't be home till mornin', anyhow."

"Shut up yo' mouf!" Dan'l Webster growled,

as he gave a jerk at the lad's collar; "everybody am lookin' at ye."

"Sure they're lookin'?" Billy asked.

"Yes, I know they is. Come erlong, an' no hangin' back, er I'll jerk ye right outen yer clothes."

"Everybody lookin'?" Billy persisted.

"Yes, everybody."

"We may as well make it interestin' fer 'em, so—there!"

With a sudden jump and a quick movement of his muscular legs, Billy caught the unsuspecting darky foul, and before the colored gentleman was aware of it he was sent sprawling upon the hard pavement of the drive.

Peals of laughter rung out all over the court, and snatching off his cap and making a profound bow, Broadway Billy made haste to get out, following one of the carriages that was at that moment leaving.

"That was a narrer squeeze," Billy muttered, as soon as he found himself outside, "fer I thought that dark' would wring my neck fer sure, an' he was big enough ter do it, too. It won't pay ter go there any more in this rig. Now I must work around an' meet Skinny, an'—Sweet pertaters! furl my fore-topsail-royal, or whatever it is, if this ain't th' carriage that I'm interested in!"

No sooner was this discovery made than Billy ran up behind it, caught hold, threw his legs up underneath to a secure position, and was carried along with it.

"Jest like old times," he thought. "Hang me if I wouldn't like ter be a boy forever, but that ain't in th' nat'ral order o' things. Now I haven't th' least idee where this vehicle is bound fer, but I have a certain interest in it, an' I'm going along. I reckon Skinny kin find his way back ter th' hotel all right. He knows th' city as well as I do, anyhow, so I'll comfort myself with that thought. He's no chicken, Skinny ain't, even if he is thin."

The carriage sped along, and Billy having got his box into place as he wanted it, and himself comfortably arranged upon the under-gear of the vehicle, found no difficulty in going along with it.

Not knowing the streets, and having only a vague general idea of the plan of the city, he could not, of course, keep in mind the direction taken when corners were turned.

He had no dread of being lost, however. He knew that questions would set him right, if he had occasion to ask them.

Finally, although his point of view was very disadvantageous, Billy found that he was in the Chinese quarter.

He had noted it sufficiently during the afternoon to recognize it again.

When the carriage stopped, at last, and the lad dropped to the ground, about the first thing that loomed up before him was the residence of the Consulate.

"Sweet pertaters!" he mentally exclaimed, "but this kallyboose has come back ag'in ter th' same house that that woman was taken to! What is goin' on, anyhow? It begins ter look ter me as though I have a special interest in this matter. Let's see who gets out."

Billy had got out from under the carriage on the street side, and he now stood where he could look around from behind to see who alighted.

A well-dressed man got out, ran up to the door, and was speedily admitted into the house, while the driver of the vehicle settled down in a way that proved that he meant to wait for him.

Broadway Billy decided to do the same.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FEVER ATTACKS SKINNY.

It is to our interest to return to Skinny.

He had started to follow in the direction in which Billy was being dragged, but, when he saw Dan'l Webster "dumped" so neatly he had to stop and join in the general laugh.

He saw Billy make his bow and hurry away, and then he gave his attention to the enraged darky, as he scrambled to his feet.

The colored gentleman's first concern was for his clothes, which he brushed with his hand carefully, at the same time growling away to himself at a great rate; and then, when he had gazed for a moment in the direction in which Billy had disappeared, he turned and started back toward where Skinny was standing.

Skinny's heart was in his throat in an instant. He remembered that he had been talking to Billy at the time when the darky captured him, and now he feared that the darky would seek revenge upon him.

There was no time to get out of sight except in one direction. There was a very narrow space between one of the columns and a huge flowering plant, and into that space the lad dodged.

It did not look large enough to admit any one, but Skinny found no difficulty in taking advantage of the space.

Barely had he taken up his position when he heard these words:

"Broadway Billy!"

Skinny's ears were wide open in an instant, and he looked to learn who it was that had spoken his partner's name.

Just on the other side of the big plant, seated in chairs, were two men, and Skinny could not possibly have had a better position for over-hearing what passed between them.

He could partly see their faces. One was a young man, about twenty-six years old, and the other, was about forty. Both were rather flashily dressed, and they had the appearance, at first sight, of sporting men.

"How do you know it's him?" the younger man demanded.

"Curse him!" the elder fiercely hissed, "don't you suppose I'd know him among a thousand? Didn't he help th' police of New York to bring me up with a round turn not more'n a hundred years ago? Besides, didn't you see his name on his box?"

"I know I've heard you mention him often enough as one of th' shrewdest boys in New York. No, I didn't notice his box. But, do you think it is possible that a boy, and a boot-black at that, could come all the way from New York to San Francisco? It looks just a little unreasonable."

"Anything is possible with that chap. Just as likely as not he is here in the interest of some detective."

"But, it takes money to travel, and it isn't likely that he ever owned a ten-dollar bill in his life."

"That's where you make your mistake. I have heard that that fellow has got several hundred in bank, and I guess it's so. I happen to know that he has been rewarded more than once, and he has any number of friends there."

"Well, of course you'd ought to know, but even if it is Broadway Billy, we have nothing to fear from him."

"That's true, but he has somethin' to fear from me. I owe him a grudge, and if I could find where he is hanging out, and could get a fair chance, I'd fix him for the whole score. It would be easy enough to do for him, out here."

"It would be easy enough, but you'd better leave him alone. You have nothin' to fear from him. He don't know you're here, and perhaps would not know you if he was to meet you. We have got bigger fish to fry than attending to boys."

"Yes, that's so, but all the same it will be healthy for this Billy to keep out of my reach, and I can tell him that."

"What became of the other chap that was with him?"

"What other chap? I didn't notice any one with him."

"Didn't ye? Why, he was a little thin feller."

"Then it was Billy's chum, sure. I think he's called Skinny. I didn't notice him at all, but then I was lookin' at Billy all the time."

They both looked around in search of Skinny, and that slender individual had reason to thank his lucky star that he was out of their sight; and not only that, but that he was where he could listen to what they had to say.

Dan'l Webster, meantime, had passed on out of sight into the main corridor, and the coast was all clear for Skinny to make his escape, but now he had good reason for choosing to remain.

"He must have gone out," the younger of the two men observed, as they failed to see the object of their search.

"Yes, I guess so," the other agreed.

"Well, as you were saying?"

"I was about to give you the lay-out of the job we have got on hand."

"Well, go ahead."

"We must take care," looking around to see who was near, "for it will not do to be overheard in this."

"Oh, no danger; there isn't a person within twenty feet of us."

Skinny, almost breathless with excitement, was not more than three feet away from them.

"Well," the elder man went on, "to-morrow night is the time set for the work. It must be no bungled job, either."

"Soon as that?"

"What are you talking about? Haven't we

spent two whole months preparing for it? Everything is almost ready, and there's no need to wait."

"Yes, I know, but I thought you would take a few days to rest up in, and to get the exact lay of the land."

"No need of it, not a bit. I've been doing that right along, all the time we have been working through that wall. We are ready to step through into the bank at any time, and to-morrow night at half-past one is the time set."

"Well, what have you laid out for me to do?"

"You are to play policeman and secure the watchman."

"And then what?"

"Then you are to give the rest of us the signal that the coast is clear, and in we'll come and the job can be done in less than an hour."

"But, do you think that I can get a uniform at such short notice? Why could you not just as well have told me about this a week ago?"

"The uniform is all right. Demson was going to play policeman, and he had a uniform made. He has a lame arm, now, though, so he can't do it. I guess you are about his size, so you needn't trouble your head about th' uniform."

"That is better. Well, you can depend on me to do my share of it."

"We meet to-morrow evening at the office, to discuss the thing thoroughly, and to arrange every detail. Do not fail to be on hand promptly at nine."

"I'll be there."

"This was what I wanted to see you for, Enos, and I thought this was about as good a place as any to tell you to meet me at."

"Must grip fast ter that name," thought the listening boy.

"You couldn't have named a better place," the young man declared. "This happens to be one of the nights when the band plays here, and it would be simply impossible for any one to overhear, even were people right close around us, and you see they are not."

"I considered all that. I have considered every move we have made in this big game. There is not a screw in it that has been left unturned, and yet somehow, as I must confess, I feel uneasy."

"Pshaw! what is there to make you uneasy?"

"Nothing, that I can see; but the sight of that boy from New York has put a damper upon me. I feel as though his appearance here at this time is an ill omen. I can't help it."

"You don't want to let such a thought as that trouble you for a moment. If I had any idea that there was any danger ahead, I would hunt him up and dispose of him for you, but I haven't. He may have done some cute things out East there, as I have heard you say; but he is in a different part of the world now, and if he bothered us his life wouldn't be worth a pistareen."

"You don't know him, and I do; that's the difference. But, as you say, we have nothing to fear from him. There is no way in which he could get onto our racket, and so I'll just banish him from my thoughts."

"That is more like it."

"Well, I must go."

Saying this the twain rose.

"Shall we part?" the latter asked.

"Yes, we had better," was the response.

"All right."

"Don't forget; the office, nine o'clock sharp."

"I'll be there."

With a wave of the hand, then, the leading spirit turned and went hurriedly out, and in a few moments the younger man sauntered leisurely off into the main corridor.

As soon as the way was clear, Skinny emerged from the place of hiding that had served him doubly well.

"Great ginger!" he exclaimed under his breath, "but I feel some of Billy's fever workin' on me, sure as shootin'. What am I ter do? Wish Billy was here. As he ain't here, though, I'll have ter do the only thing that is ter be done, an' that is to feller this feller. If I don't do that I won't have a single clew to hand over, fer their talk was so mighty close-mouthed that they didn't give away many pints."

Thus debating the matter with himself, he went in the direction the young man had taken, keeping a sharp lookout for Dan'l Webster, and at the same time not being in too much haste, for he remembered that it was the younger man who had taken notice of his talking with Billy.

His man was going forward toward the street, when Skinny got sight of him again, and the lad went after him.

As they approached the street, Skinny drew

nearer, in order not to let the man get out of sight again.

Well he knew, as has been seen by his reflections, that unless he followed this individual and learned where he lived, or lodged, he could make no use whatever of what he had overheard.

The young man stopped at the entrance for a moment, lighted a cigar, and then he set off up Market street, Skinny crossing over to the opposite side and following him, keeping at a safe distance.

A walk of about fifteen minutes brought the young man to a cross-street into which he turned, and going down that street for a little distance he entered a house, letting himself in with a latch-key.

The latch-key was evidence enough that this was his home, temporary or otherwise, but still Skinny waited for at least two hours, thinking that perhaps he would come out again. As he did not, however, the lad finally gave up and set about finding his way back to the hotel where he and Billy were staying.

CHAPTER VIII.

BILLY WINS ANOTHER FAVOR.

BROADWAY BILLY, with his box on his shoulder, stood like a soldier on guard.

He leaned against the hind wheel of the carriage, where a friendly shadow happened to lie, and watched the door of the house.

When he had been standing there about fifteen minutes, and there was still no sign of the man's coming out, he muttered:

"Sweet pertaters! it begins ter dawn upon me that I haven't got as much good, sound boss-sense as th' law allows. What be I standin' here fer, anyhow? Here I am, tryin' ter poke my nose inter other folkses business, when I'd orter be 'tendin' strictly ter my own. I can't help it, though, no more'n I kin help eatin'. I guess I must 'a' been born so. What has become of Skinny? I'd orter be kicked fer leavin' him, an' that's plain. S'pose somethin' happens ter him. Here's a fog comin' on, too, an' jest as like as not he'll git lost in it, bein' so awful thin. Don't know what I'll do with him if he gits any thinner, an' that's prime truth. I mustn't desert him in this way ag'in, an' I won't nuther. It ain't safe, nobow. But I'm wanderin' from th' pint at issue, which is: What be I standin' here fer? I'm glad that I'm so fur away from home that one person can't witness my Tom-Fool work, an' that person is Inspector Br—Hello! here comes my prize chicken!"

The door at that moment opened, and the man stepped out, followed by a large, masculine-looking woman.

The woman accompanied him down and out to the carriage.

"Yis, sor," was the response; "Oi couldn't sp'ake wid yez inside, as yez guv me no chance. How long do yez want me ter kape dhe leddy, sor?"

The man lowered his voice as he responded:

"Keep her a close prisoner, Mrs. McFaddin, until you see me again. I'll be here again to-morrow, and then if she won't sign— Well, no matter; just see that she does not escape."

"It is big money she is offerin' ter be set at liberty, sor, an'—"

"Pay no attention to her," the man exclaimed. "She has no money to pay you, and even if she had, I'll give you twice as much to hold her. Don't forget this."

"All roight, sor, Oi'll kape her."

"Don't fail to do so."

With that the man got into the carriage, and the woman stepped back.

The carriage was off at once, and Billy, in order that the woman might not see him, ran along beside it for a little distance, keeping it between himself and her, finally dodging to the sidewalk on the opposite side of the street.

He had heard the man's directions to the driver, and knew that the carriage was going back to the hotel.

The man, he had noted, was of middle age, and well-dressed.

"Sweet pertaters!" the lad cried, as he stopped to consider the case, "I was sure that there was a p'izen diffikilty a-brewin', an' now I'm surer of it than ever. That woman that was taken inter that house is bein' held there as a prisoner, an' th' man wants ter force her ter sign some sort o' paper, I take it. If she don't sign, then— Then what? I didn't like th' way that he spoke, not at all. Buckle my vest if I ain't interested in earnest now, an' I'm goin' right inter this matter an' see what it means. If there is any p'izen crooked business goin' on, an' everything seems ter indicate that there is, they kin count me in."

Swinging his box into position in his old-time way, he retraced his steps toward the house.

When he came opposite to it, being on the opposite side of the street, he stopped and surveyed it critically.

He had already done this, while waiting behind the carriage, but now he was looking at it at a little longer range.

The woman had gone in.

Chinamen were passing up and down the street on both sides, and many of them, as they saw Billy, looked at him with much curiosity.

Presently one of them stopped and surveyed him deliberately.

Noticing that some one had stopped in front of him, Billy turned his eyes upon the Chinaman, and seeing that he was looking at him, asked:

"You speakee 'Melican, John?"

The Chinaman grinned.

"Yes, me allee same speakee him," he answered, in the usual style.

"What's your name?"

"Name Tom Wah."

"That's a name good enough fer anybody, Tom. Say, do you know who lives over there in that house?" pointing to the one he was interested in.

"Allee same Irishwoman lives there," the Chinaman answered: "name Misse McFaddee."

If Billy had not already heard the name, he would never have been able to make "McFaddin" out of "McFaddee."

"What 'Melican boy name him is?" the Celestial inquired.

"My name is Billy," Billy replied.

"Allee same live San 'Flisco in?"

"No; I'm from New York."

"New Lolk!" the Chinaman cried; "me livee in New Lolk used to."

"On Mott street?"

The Celestial grinned from ear to ear.

"Yes, yes, allee same on Mott stleet," he cried.

"Put it there, then," exclaimed Billy, holding out his hand; "I'd as soon shake hands with you as any Chinese that I know."

The Chinaman grasped his hand willingly enough.

"Where do you live?" asked Billy.

"Me allee same live light here," and the Chinaman indicated the very house in front of which they were standing.

"Good enough!" Billy cried, "and if you'll ask me in I'll be proud ter honor ye with my company fer a time. I took tea with yer great consulate general this afternoon, an' here's a present that he gave me, ter prove it."

As he said this he held out his hand and displayed the ring that had been given to him.

As the Chinaman's eyes fell upon it they opened wide with wonder, and his face grew serious.

"Gleat Consulate givee you that?" he asked.

"That is what he did, Tom," Billy assured.

"If you doubt my word jest go and ask him."

"You same 'Melican boy allee same fightee Sam Foo Chow for?"

"I'm th' same critter," was the assuring reply; "th' only difference bein' that I'm now in full evenin' dress."

Several other Chinamen had now collected around them, and seeing this, Tom Wah invited Billy to come into his house immediately.

Billy followed the Celestial in, and Tom led him to his best room.

As soon as they were there Billy unslung his box and sat down upon it, in the way he had been accustomed to do in the days when he and his box were inseparable companions; took off his cap and said:

"Now, Tommy, old boss, I'm gcin' ter claim ther floor fer th' time bein' an' put you in th' witness-box, ez it war. What do you know about this Mrs. McFaddin? If you cannot understand my street gibberish, which I must always use, I'll try and polish up my speech a little for your benefit."

This Billy was able to do, for he had attended night-school not a little, and had given a good deal of his spare time to his books besides, as has been mentioned casually in previous stories.

"What 'Melican boy want know?" the Chinaman asked, showing that he had not understood.

"I want to know something about Mrs. McFaddin," Billy repeated. "What kind of person is she? What does she do for a living?"

Speaking plainly and slowly he was readily understood.

"Oh! Misse McFaddee she Irish son-of-a-gun, allee same keepee boardin'-house and sellee pipes to smokee. Fightee allee same likee man."

"Sweet pertaters! she keeps a boardin'-house, does she? That is jest what I am in search of, Tommy. If I kin git a night's lodgin' under her

roof, no knowin' what will come of it. But, I'm droppin' back inter street slang, an' you don't understand nothin' but polished English. Say, do you think I could get lodging there for the night?"

"Allee same stay here," the Chinaman quickly offered most hospitably.

"Much obliged, Tom, but that won't help me out with what I've got in mind, I fear. By the way, are you on friendly terms with Mrs. McFaddin?"

"Yes, allee same good enough, but don't likee her."

"That's the talk. I'll tell you what I am up to. There is a prisoner over in that house that hadn't ought to be there, and I want to get lodging there to help her get away. Now do you think that if you took me over and introduced me to the landlady as a friend of yours from New York, that she would take me to board?"

"Yes, me thinkee so, if she havee loom in house."

"Well, it won't do any hurt to go over and see if she's got room. See here, though, Tom, you must not mention what I've told you."

"About plisoner?"

"Yes."

"No, me allee same keepee vely still."

"All right; and now what about this ring that your Great Mogul gave me? Will all Chinamen respect it, and do what I want them to? or will they be inclined to think that I stole it?"

"'Melican boy lookkee mighty tough, allee same likee New Lolk bootblack; may tink him stealee ling."

"And how am I to prove that I didn't?"

"Hold on, me fixee you," the Celestial exclaimed, and getting up from his stool he went to a closet at one end of the room.

From the closet he brought out some India ink and a long, slender bone needle that was sharp at both ends.

"Me puttee mark on 'Melican boy him's list," indicating Billy's wrist, "an' no Chinaman hurtee him; allee same savee him life ebely time."

"Good enough!" Billy cried. "Slap on yer sign-manual, Tommy," and he bared his wrist to receive the mark.

The Chinaman set to work, and in a few moments Billy's wrist bore a curious little indelible character, the meaning of which he knew not, but which he had full confidence would do all that Tom Wah had claimed for it.

"Now 'Melican boy allee light," the Chinaman declared; "no Chinaman hurtee him. Allee same allee Chinamans do what 'Melican boy say, when he show ling of Gleat Consulate Gen'ral."

CHAPTER IX.

A BIG POINT OF ADVANTAGE.

BROADWAY BILLY naturally felt that he was becoming something of a Chinaman.

He had found such marked favor at the hands of the Celestials that he had a sort of fellow-feeling for them, and looked upon "John" in a more friendly light than he had ever done before.

"Sweet pertaters!" he exclaimed, "but as soon as I kin grow a pig-tail, Tom, I'll be a sure-nuff Chinese. Seems queer that I had ter sail all these five thousand eight hundred an' odd miles ter make yer 'quaintance, John Chinaman, when there's lots of ye right at home. There's plenty o' strange things in this world of ours, though, an' they're croppin' out all th' time. Here I'm driftin' back inter street gibber again, though, which you don't git onto with ease and grace. Come, let's go over and see Mrs. McFaddin."

The last was spoken slowly, and Tom Wah responded immediately.

"Yes, allee same come 'long, Tom Wah go too."

Billy put on his cap, got up and shouldered his box and was ready, and the Chinaman led the way out.

They crossed over to the door of Mrs. McFaddin's house.

The Chinaman rung the bell, and it was the landlady herself who answered to the summons.

Billy held back a little, preferring to see what his friend would say.

"Phwat d'yez be wantin', Tom?" the woman immediately demanded.

"Goodee-eveling, Misse McFaddee," the Chinaman responded; "this 'Melican boy, allee same fiend Tom Wah, him comee allee same New Lolk ffrom; wantee gitee boardin'-place, me blingee him here."

Mrs. McFaddin gave Billy a searching look, and said:

"O've got no room fur dhe loikes av yez, lad. Yez will have ter be afther lookin' furdher, so ye will."

"Allee same takee him one night," persisted the Chinaman; "him look 'lound to-molly, then."

"Phwy don't yez kape him yersel?" the woman demanded.

"Jest let me orate once," put in Billy, seeing that the matter was not working favorably to him. "I likes the looks of ye, Mrs. McFaddin, and it is in your house that I would be staying. Ye remind me of me mother's sister what's dead and gone now, but what came over from the old country, an' took care of me when I was left a poor, lone orphing, but bein' dead has left me more orphinger than ever. I have money to pay for me keep, and if you will just take me in for this one night, I'll sleep on the floor, with me box for a pillar an' me ragged vest fur an overcoat, to serve as a coverin'."

This was rattled off as only Broadway Billy's tongue could rattle it, and the Irishwoman had to smile as he ended.

"You are Irish, then?" she asked.

"Not a bit of it," cried Billy. "Me parents was Irish before me, though, so I'm first-cousin to it."

"And yez are from New York?"

"That's what I am, Mrs. McFaddin; but havin' nothin' to keep me there, and wantin' to see a bit of the world, I stole off on a ship, and here I am. I am as honest as the green grass, Mrs. McFaddin, and if ye will only take me fur this one night, when I'm so tired, fur the sake of me mother's dead sister what's left me more orphinger than I was before, and give me a bit to eat, fur all of which I'll pay ye right on the spot, and give ye an orphing's blessing, that—"

Mrs. McFaddin put up both hands and waved him to silence.

"Saints presarve me! phwat a talker yez are!" she cried. "O! have wan little cubby av a room away up furninst dhe roof, an' if yez want ter sl'ape dhere yez may."

"May Saint Patrick send ye a chromo!" exclaimed Billy. "I'll take it, Mrs. McFaddin, an' it is so sweet me dreams will be that I'll be dwellin' in marble halls all night. It's all right, Tom," turning to the Chinaman, "an' I'll drop in and see ye to-morrow. Tra-la-la."

With a wave of his hand to the astonished Chinaman, then, he stepped into the house and the woman shut the door.

"Are yez hungry, lad?" she asked.

"Not half as hungry as I am sleepy," Billy answered, "and if ye will show me straight to me room, I'll eat me supper and me breakfast both at once in the mornin'."

The woman was amused, and she liked Billy already.

"What is your name?" she asked.

"Me name is Denny McGoogin, ma'am."

"Dhat's a good name, at all evints. Well, O! will take yez roight to dhe hole av a room dhat O! mintioned, and in dhe marnin' yez may ate a all ye pl'aze. Come along wid me."

She led the way to the very top floor of the house, and there threw open the door of the room she had spoken of, which was simply a big closet. There was a bed on the floor.

"Bless me, ma'am," cried Billy, "but this is a room fit for a king. Sure, it is a permanent boarder I'll be, an' ye'll have me as such."

A good deal of talk followed, and when the woman finally went down-stairs she carried with her the impression that Denny McGoogin was the best and brightest lad of his years that she had ever seen.

Billy had told her that he was only fifteen, which she did not for a moment doubt.

"Sweet pertaters!" Billy exclaimed as soon as he was alone, "but I thought she would keep me a-talkin' till I'd run down. Well, she's disposed of for th' time bein', an' here I am. Now what am I ter do? I only wish that I'd been fitted out with th' usual quantity o' brain when I was built. Wonder how a feller feels that's got his right share o' that article? I'd buy a pint, if I only knowed of some place where they keep it on tap. Yes, here I am, and what's ter be done? Now that I'm inter th' den, how am I ter locate that woman's room? Hang me up an' smoke me fer a herring if I know. But, this is one big move made, an' if I can't go ahead now I ain't worthy of th' confederence of Inspector Br— Hello! I hear voices below."

Down he dropped and laid his ear to the floor.

Sure enough, voices reached him from the room below, and one of them he recognized as that of the landlady.

"Yez may as well take it aisy," she was say-

ing, "fur yez won't git out av dhe room till Oi'm tould ter let ye out. Don't be shpeakin' about what ye'll give me ter let yez go, fur it's twice as much I'll be gittin' ter kape ye here. Av dhere's nothin' yez want, Oi'll bid ye good-noight."

"You are heartless," cried another voice. "You are keeping me from my home and children. You are aiding my villainous brother in his scheme to rob me. He has no wealth, while I have, and if you will only let me go—"

The Irishwoman interrupted with a laugh. "Dhat is too thin," she cried. "It is him as has dhe wealth, while you have none. Yez can't blarney me dhat way. Oi am too old a bird—"

"No, no, he has lied to you, indeed he has. If he has wealth, why does he imprison me here to force mine away from me?"

"There's a square cube o' logic in that," thought Broadway Billy, "an' we'll see how Mrs. McFaddin gits around it."

"Yis, but Oi have seen dhe color av his money, while Oi haven't av yours," was her return.

"But you shall see it, I promise faithfully that you shall. Release me from here immediately, accompany me home, and I will place a thousand dollars into your hand the moment we reach there."

"An' by kapin' yez here Oi'll git two thousand. Oi'm not so grane, Oi hope, as ter let ye bloind me loike dhat. Good-noight to ye."

"Oh! do not keep me here! Do not—"

But a door slammed shut, and the woman's pleading ended in an outburst of sobbing.

"Sweet pertaters!" muttered Billy to himself, "but I knowed it. I knowed from th' first that there was a diffikilty brewin', or th' fever wouldn't 'a' took bolt o' me as it did. Now whats ter be done? How am I ter play th' hero knight an' rescue th' imperiled female from her dilemmer? Let's take th' question inter debate an' figger it down. It's most too early fer me ter go spookin' about th' house, so that ain't ter be thought of fer th' present. What then? Seems ter me that I heerd them talk mighty plain, considerin' that they wasn't talkin' very loud. Why was that? Reckon this floor ain't very thick."

A candle had been left with him, and by its light he proceeded to examine the floor, there being no carpet or other covering on it.

Barely had he begun his examination when he made a discovery.

In the place where he had laid his head to listen there was a small square, about ten inches each way. It was on a level with the rest of the floor, and only the newness of the board that formed it had drawn his attention to it.

He looked at it more closely, and could not see that it was nailed, so setting down the candle, he took out his knife and tried to pry the board up.

In a few moments his efforts were rewarded, he could look down through a pipe-hole into the room below.

"It is as plain as th' nose of the man in th' moon," Billy muttered, as, looking further, he found that there was a corresponding pipe-hole in the roof overhead. "This house has held a Chinese colony or two, at some time or other, and there being no chimbley near th' room below, they've had ter build one of tin. Now, soon's that woman will stop her cryin' so that she can hear me whisper, I'll try an' open up communication with her."

The woman was weeping bitterly, but by degrees she became more quiet, and when he thought there was a chance of his being heard, Billy put his face to the pipe-hole and whispered down:

"Stop crying, lady, and listen."

The weeping ceased instantly.

"Don't speak a word," Billy further whispered, "but look up to the ceiling and you will see a hole. Come under that hole and you will see a friend."

Steps were heard at once, and the woman came and looked up as directed. Billy could see her plainly enough, and she could see his face.

She looked to be about forty years of age, and had every appearance of being a lady of means and refinement.

"Who are you?" she whispered.

"I am a boy that will try to help you to escape from here, if it can be done, but you must be very quiet so that we will not be discovered."

"Thank God!" the woman exclaimed fervently but cautiously. "Help me to escape from here, brave boy, and you shall be handsomely rewarded."

"Never mind about the reward part of it," Billy whispered back. "Just keep still till th'

house is all asleep, but mind that you don't fall asleep yourself, and when I think that it is safe for me to move about I'll call down to you again and we'll have further talk."

"Very well, I will do just as you have directed."

The woman walked away, and Billy sat down to wait for time.

CHAPTER X.

BROADWAY BILLY HEARS SOMETHING.

AZIM McDUFF was an ash-cart man.

Mrs. McFaddin was a widow, and Azim was one of her boarders.

The ash-cart man was paying court to the widow, and was trying to win her heart and hand in the honorable bonds of matrimony.

One night each week the widow allowed her lover to enjoy her company, and the night of which we write happened to be one of those enjoyable occasions.

Hence it was that Broadway Billy waited in vain for the house to become quiet enough for him to set to work to assist the woman prisoner to escape. He had opened the door of his little cockloft room, and the constant sound of voices came to his ears faintly from the lower part of the house.

He had a watch, at which he glanced frequently and impatiently.

When one o'clock came around, and the sound of voices was still heard, the uneasy lad mentally exclaimed:

"Sweet pertaters! ain't they goin' ter roost ter-night? What do they mean by stayin' up till this onseemly hour? Snap my fore-royal-stay, if I don't steal down into th' regions below and see what's goin' on. If I'm discovered I'll make out that I'm walkin' in my sleep. It won't do fer me ter let too much timeslip away, an' that is a fact that ain't ter be despised. Time is money, an' a good many other things besides, an' if I want ter keep solid in th' cornerfence of Inspector Br— Hello! there's th' female below a-whisperin' at me. I reckon she's gettin' oneasy, too."

Getting down and putting his face over the hole, he responded to the call.

"Here I am," he said, "as wide-awake as an owl with th' toothache."

"Isn't it late enough yet?" the woman asked.

"It is one o'clock, and plenty late enough," Billy informed, "but th' fack of th' case is th' house don't seem ter be inclined ter go ter sleep. I was jest on th' p'int of goin' down and scoutin' around a little ter see what th' lay of th' land is. I reckon we'd better have our little talk first, though, so that in case I git nabbed and don't have any chance to help you, I'll be able to inform your friends where you are. Jest go ahead, ma'am, and give me yer name and other p'int of information that will be helpful."

"Yes, that I must do," the woman whispered back, "and you are very thoughtful to mention it. Are you listening?"

"Yes, listenin' with both ears," Billy assured.

"Very well, pay close attention: My name is Mrs. Emma Goodwin. I am the wife of Vincent Goodwin, who is president of the Placer Bank. My home is at No. — California street. If you get no chance to help me out of here, go to my husband immediately and inform him where I am. Tell him that I have been brought here and imprisoned by my brother Goodridge, who is trying to force me to sign important papers."

"Is that all you have to say?" Billy asked.

"I think that is all that is necessary, is it not?" the woman responded.

"Yes, that's plenty ter work on, but I thought mebbey you might have more to tell. I've got it all down pat."

"Can you remember the name and address of my husband?"

"You bet. I have stored th' p'int away in th' vacant space where my brain orter be. Find it handy ter have loft-room in my upper-story, sometimes. Now I'm goin' down ter see what's goin' on, and if I don't come back, you jest keep a stiff upper lip and I'll see to it that your husband is put onto th' racket in good shape."

"What is your name, and how old are you?"

"Didn't you hear me tellin' all that to th' landlady this evenin'?"

"I heard you talking, but could not distinguish your words."

"Well, my real name is Broadway Billy, which you don't want to mention, and I might be taken for a kid of fifteen, I s'pose. I'm from New York. Mind, not a word of this to any one. My name here is Denny McGoogin."

"Well, well, no matter about that, I suppose."

You are a stranger to me, but if you will bring about my release from this horrible place I will see that you are rewarded handsomely."

"Don't say a word about that, ma'am. Now I'm goin' down below. I'll be back in half an hour if I don't git nabbed. If I do, I'll make enough noise ter let you know it."

"All right, I shall be awake."

Billy got up, replaced the board over the hole, and opened the door again, as he had shut it while talking with the prisoner.

He had long ago put out his candle, in order that its light might not be seen, and in consulting his watch, had held it over the hole in the floor where the light from the room below was sufficient to show him the time.

Having shouldered his box, for he had no desire to lose it if he happened to be discovered and put out of the house, he stepped silently from the room.

At the top of the very narrow staircase he listened, and the voices were still to be heard.

Cautiously he made his way down.

When he reached the first landing, he felt for the door that opened into the room where the prisoner was.

At first he did not find it, but presently, on proceeding further along the hall, he discovered it by the light that came under the door and through the keyhole.

Stepping up close to the door, he tapped lightly upon it, and whispered:

"Mrs. Goodwin!"

"What is it?" was the immediate response.

"I wanted to make sure of your door, that's all. Now I'm goin' on down."

"All right."

Of course Billy had given some attention to the plan of the house when he had entered, and had but little trouble in finding his way in the dark.

Slowly and cautiously he proceeded, and finally found himself on the ground floor, where the voices were more distinct, and where a light under a door guided him to the room where the persons were talking.

Advancing carefully, he was soon in a position to overhear what was being said.

A man was speaking.

"I hardly know phwat to make av it, Missurs McFaddin," he was saying. "As it is none av me business, though, Oi suppose Oi had better kape still about it."

"Yez say ye foind dhis in dhe ash-can every marnin'?" asked the voice of the landlady.

"Every other marnin', Missurs McFaddin."

"Oh, yes, you only go there every other day to be sure. Well, it is raythur strange, and dhat is true. You say it is jest so much of foine plasterin' and brick, every toime."

"So Oi do, Missurs McFaddin. Dhere is about a hatful av it in dhe ash-can as sure as dhe marnin' comes round."

"And how long has dhis been goin' on, Azim?"

"Oi have noticed it fur several weeks past."

"And you say ye have some suspishun about it?"

"Dhat same Oi have."

"And phwat is it yez suspect?"

"Pay attintion, Missurs McFaddin, and Oi will disclose it to yez. Ye know dhat all dhat neighborhood, 'specially perchune California strate and Bush strate, and Sansome strate and Montgomery strate, is dhe great finansul part av dhe city. It is in dhat neighborhood dhat dhis house is, and roight next dure to it is dhe Placer Bank. Now, it has entered me head dhat it is robbers thryin' ter work dheir way tru from dhat house inter dhe bank."

"Jest as loike as not yez are roight," the landlady exclaimed.

"And dhe question is, What should Oi do about it? If dhere was any reward ter be gained, begorra Oi'd put dhe perlice onto dhe game."

"Which it isn't loikely dhere is at all at all. Now, if yez could watch and foind who puts dhe shtuff in dhe ash-can, an' threaten ter blow on 'em unless dhey came down wid dhe rocks, yez moight make somethin' out av it."

"Faith, and Oi bel'ave yez are roight, Missurs McFaddin. Oi hadn't thought av dhat. Dhis is dhe noight, too, and Oi'll go dhere and take a look in dhe ash-can before Oi retire."

"It may be money into yer pocket if yez can only catch dhe dhirty rascals at dheir work," Mrs. McFaddin encouraged.

"Begorra, but if it isn't in dhe ash-can yet, Oi'll wait and catch dheir," the man declared. "And av Oi catch thim," he added, "Oi'll give dheir a scare as sure as me name is Azim McDuff. Oi'll be takin' me l'ave now, Missurs McFaddin."

"All roight, Azim me darling, and it is good success dhat Oi wish yez."

Billy heard them move then, and hurriedly retreated to the stairs. He had no desire to be discovered, after hearing such a conversation as this.

Making his way to the next floor, he waited there.

Presently the door of the room below opened, and the pair came out and went along the hall to the front door, where, after some whispered talk, they parted, Azim going out into the night and fog.

"Sweet pertaters!" Broadway Billy exclaimed in thought, "but I'd like ter foller him and find out what's goin' on. Have I stumbled upon another diffikilty? I hope so, if I kin only handle th' thing right and bring th' case out in my usual first-class style. Wish I knowed this city as well as I do New York, I wouldn't have ter be piloted around, then. If I can't foller this man, how am I ter find th' place he's goin' to? That's a question. But, I mustn't allow it ter stump me. I mustn't lose th' cornference of Inspector Br— Hello! here comes th' landlady this way, an' I'd better be makin' myself scarce, I reckon."

Mrs. McFaddin was coming up the stairs, and Billy made haste to ascend the next flight to keep out of her way.

As he stopped at the landing, however, he soon found that she was coming right on up, so he made haste to get back to his cockpit as quickly and silently as he could.

The landlady went no further than the door of her prisoner's room.

Billy heard her unlock the door and enter, and then exclaim:

"Phwat! are yez not in bed, ma'am? Sure, and it is foolish ye are to be robbin' yersel' av slape in dhis way. It is takin' yer loight away from yez Oi'll be doin', Oi think."

"Take it if you want to," was the quiet answer, "I am not afraid of the dark. Perhaps I will go to sleep then."

"Oi'll give yez dbe chance to thry, anyhow."

The door opened again, and the landlady came out with a lamp in hand, and when she had locked the door she returned to the region below.

As soon as she had passed beyond hearing, Billy took up the board of the floor and whispered down:

"Mrs. Goodwin!"

"I hear you," was the response.

"I don't see that there is much chance for me to get you out of here alone," Billy said, then, "but as the coast is all clear for me to get away myself, I think I had better take advantage of it and let your husband know about the fix you are in."

"I think so, too," came back the reply. "This door is locked, and the hour is very late for me to go out, even could I escape. Go, and may God guide you!"

CHAPTER XI.

BILLY GETS A BIG SCARE.

A FEW more remarks were exchanged, and the Bootblack Bravo closed the hole.

Not forgetting his box, he opened his door and listened, and the way being all clear, started down once more.

He reached the ground floor all right, and felt his way to the front door, and finding that it was secured with only an ordinary night-latch, was soon out upon the street.

"Sweet pertaters, kerryse, cotton-seed an' main-royal-staysails!" he exclaimed, "if this ain't like old times. Life wouldn't be worth livin' if I couldn't keep pokin' my nose inter all sorts o' consarned diffikilities. Th' only thing that I am troubled about is Skinny. I'd like ter know whether he got back to his roost all right. No use mournin' over him, though. He's no chicken, and when it comes right down to th' plain fax of th' case, I guess he's as able to take keer o' himself as I am, but it wouldn't do ter tell him so, fer it would make him vain. Now, what be I ter do? Here I am, a pilgrim an' a stranger, and don't know t'other street from which. Bet my kit that I buy a map of this town to-morrow, and a compass, too, if necessary. Must be able ter navigate, or I'll lose my bearin's. How am I ter find th' Placer Bank? It would take a Chicago detective ter find it in this fog, anyhow. Must do somethin', now, though, or this case will sp'ile on my hands, and I'll lose the cornference of Inspector Br— Hello! that's th' idee; I'll go over and drum up Tommy Wah."

His move decided upon, he started across the street immediately.

Several loud knocks brought a sleepy-looking

Chinese head out at a window, and something was demanded in Chinese.

"I give it up," said Billy. "I don't talk that way, specially at night and in a fog, when sich a distortion o' my jaws might result in th' brown-keety-us, or some other ailment almost as bad. Is that you, Tom Wah?"

"Yes, allee same me," was the answer; "what wantee him?"

"I am yer New York friend, Tommy, and I want to see you bad."

"You allee same Billee?"

"That's me," Billy assured.

"Allee light! me comee light down."

The head disappeared, and in a few minutes the door was opened.

"Whatee want Tom Wah see of?" was the not very intelligible question.

"I'll tell ye, Tommy, in short meter," Billy responded. "I've just got an inklin' of one of th' consarned diffikilities that you— Hold on, though, you don't understand anything but plain United States. I'll begin again. Tom, I want you to show me the way to the Placer Bank, right away."

"Placee Bankee? Me no savvy."

"It is a bank, some where around Sansome, Bush, California or Montgomery street. It is named Placer Bank. If you don't know where it is, just take me over to that neighborhood, and I'll find it myself."

The Chinaman had a thousand and one questions to ask before he would move, but finally, when Billy had enlightened him upon the various points; why he had left the house of Mrs. McFaddin, why he wanted to go to the bank, etc., he agreed to guide him to the place he wanted to reach.

Tom Wah was soon ready, and they set out. They had but little to say on the way, and finally arrived in the neighborhood Billy had named.

The fog had now lifted.

They were walking along, when suddenly Billy caught sight of a man who was standing half-concealed in a doorway, and thinking immediately that it might be the man McDuff, the lad looked at the building closely.

He saw that it was the bank he desired to find.

Saying nothing to the Chinaman, not wanting to let the waiting man suspect that he had been seen, Billy waited until they had passed on for a little distance before he spoke.

"I've seen the place I wanted to find, Tom," he said then, "and you kin cut fer home as soon as you please."

"Whatee say?" the Celestial interrogated.

"The bank that I wanted to find is right back there," Billy repeated, speaking more plainly, "and now you may go back home."

"Oh! allee light; me go home light away."

Billy thanked him for his service, cautioned him to say nothing to his fellow Chinamen nor any one else, and sent him off.

"Now fer it," the lad thought, as he stood alone on the street. "I must get back there and help Mr. McDuff keep his lonesome vigil. He might git tired doin' it all alone, but with my help I know he'll hold out like a major. Hard-a-port, Willyum, an' come up inter th' wind an' start on th' long tack. Steady, now, an' hold yer pint right on. Oh! but this is what I like, it is, and if I only knowed the city better I bet I'd make things hum. I'll try ter do a little hummin' anyhow."

Having turned back, he kept well into all the shadows that he could, and finally, when he had gained about as near a position as he thought he could reach without discovery, sat down on the curb in one of the shadows and waited.

Nothing of an exciting nature happened, and in about an hour McDuff, evidently too tired and sleepy to watch longer, left his post and started for home.

"Sweet pertaters!" muttered Billy, "he ain't got no stick to at all. That is what I call peterin' out in th' early bloom of th' fun. Pshaw! he's got no grit in him. Well; now it's me fer it alone, an' seein' that th' coast is clear I reckon I'll take a survey of th' land an' see how it lays."

With this he got up, crossed over to the opposite side of the street, and when there, looked back at the bank and the building that adjoined it.

The bank was on a corner, and lights were burning dimly within.

The building that adjoined it had the appearance of a dwelling, but was evidently cut up into offices now, and rented piecemeal.

At first no lights were to be seen, but as Billy looked closely he made the discovery that one set of windows on the second floor was heavily

curtained, and that a very faint light was to be seen here and there at the edges of the curtains.

"Somethin' rotten in Denmark, an' that is sure," the lad decided. "I'd like ter git onto th' whole skeem. This is th' buildin' next door to th' bank, an' that bank is th' one that Mrs. Goodwin's husband is president of. Do these two cases drift inter each other? That's what I'd like ter know, an' what I must know. But, see here, I'm beginnin' ter git leg-weary, an' I guess I'll step right in here an' take it easy while I watch."

By "right in here" Billy meant into the entrance-way of a building that was open to the street. Owing to the general mildness of the climate, some of the office buildings are without the usual outer doors, the main entrance being open and unguarded.

Billy mounted the steps until he was under the sheltering shadows, and there, where he could observe the opposite side of the street without being seen himself, he sat down and began his watch.

He fell asleep, and when he awoke he found that it was just growing light.

"Sweet pertaters!" he exclaimed, as he rubbed his eyes and looked around him, "where am I, anyhow? Oh! now I remember, and—Sweet pertaters! I am a healthy old detective, I am, ter fall asleep like that! I ain't worth th' least degree of th' cornference of Inspector Br— Hello! I ain't too late fer th' funeral, though after all!"

His eyes were suddenly drawn to the opposite side of the street, where a man had just come out of the house he had intended watching.

This man carried a duster under his arm, and had a panful of dirt in his hand. He had the appearance of a janitor, and such in fact, he was.

Stepping forward to an ash-can that stood by the curb, he threw the dirt into it and went back again into the building.

Billy left his place of hiding immediately and crossed over and took a look into the can.

The dirt that the man had deposited was finely ground brick, as could be seen at a glance. Where had it come from? If it had been found in the ash-can every other day for weeks, as the ash-cart man, McDuff, had declared, what was going on in that building? Billy believed that the theory that McDuff had advanced was close upon the truth.

The lad had some of the dirt in his hand, examining it, and for the moment was so absorbed in his thoughts that he did not observe a man who was coming out of the building.

Billy did not see him till he had reached the sidewalk, and then looking suddenly up, at the sound of footsteps, he received a shock that for an instant caused his face to turn pale.

He recognized the man at sight. It was an old enemy, a man whom Billy had twice before been the means of sending to prison.

"Sweet pertaters!" he exclaimed mentally, "it is Sharkey Dan! Now I am in fer it, an' I'll bet that my life ain't worth a nickel."

Dan Bingham it was, or "Sharkey" Dan, as he was better known, and his presence proved that he had again escaped from prison.

"Curse you!" he hissed, as he advanced, "what are you doin' here?"

Billy took care not to let him get hold of him. "Tendin' ter my own business," was his retort.

"You don't seem to be," Sharkey accused; "what are you huntin' in that ash-can fer?"

"If you was as hungry as I be," answered Billy, "you might be glad ter take a look inter ash-cans, too. Say, give me a dime, to stave off starvation, will ye? I'm so hungry I don't remember what I dreamed last night."

"Curse you! I'll help your memory a little. Do you know me?"

"Can't say's I do."

"Well, I know you, then. You are Broadway Billy, the little devil that— Say, though, don't you really recognize me?"

"You must be a little disjointed in your top story, I guess," Billy averred. "What are ye talkin' about, anyhow? About th' only way that I reckonize ye is as a fit subjeck fer th' loonytick 'sylum."

While speaking thus, Sharkey Dan was trying to get near to Billy, and Billy was as determinedly edging off.

"Come and give me a shine, then," the man said, stopping short, "and in that way earn your breakfast. Don't take me for a crazy man. I thought I recognized you, but I must have been mistaken."

"Can't do it," Billy declined, "fer I'm all out o' blackin', an' I'm too awful hungry ter work, anyhow. Must hunt 'round till I find a crust or

a bone, an' then mebbly I'll be fit fer biz. Ta-ta!"

He moved off, but with a muttered curse the man sprung after him, as though to capture him. And he almost succeeded, too. Billy barely escaped, but seeing that he had escaped, he made the very best use he could of his legs, and led Sharkey Dan such a chase that the latter was finally "winded," and forced to give it up. Billy kept right on, though, until sure that he had thrown his enemy off the track, when he set about finding his way to the hotel, where he hoped to rejoin Skinny.

CHAPTER XII.

BILLY IN A NEW DRESS.

WHEN Broadway Billy reached the hotel he found it just waking into life for another day's business.

It was pretty early in the morning, and there was yet time for him to snatch a little more sleep if he made good use of it.

Making his way to his room, after a little tilt with one of the porters who was not inclined to admit him, he knocked at the door to arouse Skinny, and presently his partner's sleepy voice demanded:

"Who's there?"

"It is I, your guardian angel," Billy responded.

Skinny was wide-awake immediately, and opened the door, exclaiming:

"Ginger! but I'm glad you've come, Billy! I have got somethin' to tell ye, an' it is somethin'—"

"Jest hold yer hosses right there," Billy interrupted, as he entered and closed the door, "fer I don't mean ter talk ner be talked to till I've had some sleep. I'm goin' ter bunk right down here on th' floor," taking a pillow from the bed and suiting actions to the words, "and if you interrupt me fer two straight hours I'll pulverize ye. Bear that in mind, my prize skeleton."

"But, Billy, there is a—"

"I don't care if there is. You jest roll back inter bed, an' call me in exactly two hours an' then I'll listen to ye. Not another peep."

Billy was thoroughly in earnest, and so Skinny had to curb his impatience and submit. In two minutes Billy was snoring.

There was no more sleep for Skinny, though, and when he had lain for about an hour he got up and dressed. Working around the room slowly as he made his morning toilet, half an hour more was consumed, and then he could stand it no longer.

Giving Billy a poke with his foot, he cried:

"Come! great goodness! d'ye want ter sleep all day? Hustle up out of that! It would take a earthquake ter wake you up."

Billy sat up and rubbed his eyes.

"What's th' matter?" he demanded.

"Matter!" cried Skinny; "why, you told me ter call yer in two hours, an' here you are tryin' ter sleep till noon. Come, stir yer stumps—"

"Look here, you sickly shadder," cried Billy, as he scrambled up, "if I was sure you are cheatin' me out of any of that two hours' snooze, I'd tie a thread to yer neck an' pull ye through th' keyhole."

"Ginger! you've slept away over time, so don't worry. Come, stir around an' git on some decent clothes, an' while you're doin' that I'll tell ye somethin' that will make yer hair curl."

"What d'ye mean? What has got over ye, Skinny? Ye are as excited as a crazy bedbug. Any one would think that th' detective fever was workin' on ye, ter look at ye."

"That's jest what it is, Billy, fer a fack."

"What?"

"That's what it is, an' I've stumbled upon one of th' best things you ever heard of. Go ahead, though, and git ready fer grub, an' while you are doin' that I'll unwind the tale to ye."

"All right, fire ahead."

Billy set about washing himself and changing his clothes, and Skinny told all about his adventures of the evening.

"Sweet pertaters!" Billy cried, when Skinny finished, "but you are bound ter be a second Pinkerton! Who would 'a' thought it of a shadder like you. You are thinner than ever, Skinny, owin' ter th' anxiety ye have passed through. But you are a boss jest th' same, an' I am goin' ter promote ye an' increase yer pay. Henceforth you are my lieutenant. How does that title strike ye? Lieutenant Skinny—ha, ha, ha! But, ter git right down ter business, I have got some pints on that same racket, my gay an' festive pard."

"You have!" Skinny exclaimed.

"That's what I have. You jest listen while I orate."

Billy went ahead, then, and told all about his adventures.

Skinny listened with eyes and mouth open wide. Here was something that he had never dreamed of. It did not seem possible that Billy, too, could have learned something of the same matter from so entirely different a direction.

"Billy," he cried, "you are a terror. I'm afraid that you will be a dead one, though, if that Sharkey Dan gits holt of ye. He's got it in fer you, an' now that he's likely ter suspect that you are onto his game, he'll try to dispose of ye."

"Right ye are, Fatty, but that ain't goin' ter scare me off, not a bit. I'm goin' inter this game now fer all I'm worth, and if I don't make things hum it will be 'cause I've lost my grip, that's all."

"But you must keep out o' Sharkey's clutches."

"I'll try ter do that. But, come, let's have breakfast, fer there goes th' gong. I feel as though I could eat a whale."

Billy was ready, and they went down to the dining-room.

The Bootblack Bravo was altogether another person now. He was clad in a neat suit, with derby hat and tidy standing collar, and looked to be just what he was, a thoroughbred young American.

He was just at that point of life when clothes made all the difference in the world in his looks. In his rough-and-ready bootblack attire, he looked to be a boy of fifteen—certainly not over seventeen, but now, in this gentlemanly-appearing outfit, he looked fully twenty.

His table acquaintances welcomed him back to the board, and were eager to inquire about his adventures of the night, and in answering their inquiries Billy had to invent a little as he went along.

"Did your absence cause your partner any anxiety?" one man asked.

"Yes, quite a little," Billy responded. "He is considerably thinner than he was last night, as perhaps you can notice."

He had dropped his street *patois* for the time. "I cannot say that. I notice it," the man returned.

"It is all in his mind," Skinny exclaimed. "His appetite is so big this mornin' that other things look small in comparison, that's what is the matter. I am no thinner than I was."

"You can't see yourself as others see you, Skinny," averred Billy. "You do not realize what a slender blade you are. You are a tender flower, and it requires my constant care and attention to keep you from drooping and fading away into nothing. By the way, can any of you gentlemen tell me weere I can buy a good hound?"

"You might be able to get one by advertising," some one suggested.

"Thank you, that's what I'll have to do, I guess. I must have one, and it is not safe to put it off any longer."

A momentary silence.

"Why do you want a bound?" the man who had suggested advertising inquired.

"I have got to invent some means of keeping track of my partner," Billy explained. "If he keeps on getting thinner I soon won't be able to see him. I thought I'd buy a good hound, and then let him carry a scent-bag in his pocket so that the dog could follow him. I'd have to muzzle the dog, though, or it might mistake Skinny for a bone, and then I would have no partner at all. Even Skinny is better than none."

Billy's inimitable way of saying this brought a round of laughter from those around, and when it had subsided, Skinny spoke up.

"I can improve upon that plan, Billy," he announced.

"All right, let's hear from you, then," Billy invited.

"We'll buy a magnet, and you can carry that and I'll carry the piece of steel that belongs to it, and we'll never be separated."

So the two lads joked, but as soon as they had returned to their room Billy became serious immediately.

"Now, Skinny," he said, "we must get down to business. We are both into this game, and both in to win. Hence we'll sally forth together. We'll go first and see Mr. Goodwin, the bank president."

"And you'll tell him about the intended robbery?"

"No, sir. We'll go and interview the chief of police with that bit of news. Goodwin would kick up a fuss right away and scare the fellows off. No, we'll let him be in the dark for the present."

"I guess you are right. Now I'll just pocket these letters of introduction that I've got, and we'll set out."

Billy took some letters from his trunk and put them in his pocket, and they left the room.

Knowing that it would be the quickest and easiest way for them to get around, Billy engaged a cab.

"Where to?" the driver of the vehicle asked.

"Number — California street," Billy directed.

In due time they were at their destination.

The two lads got out, Billy told the driver to wait, and they presented themselves at the door of the banker's residence.

A servant answered their ring.

"We want to see Mr. Goodwin, immediately, upon important business," Billy announced.

"Your name?" the servant inquired.

"Never mind our names," said Billy, "for we are strangers. Just say to the gentleman that we have news concerning his wife."

The face of the servant brightened, and she admitted them without further challenge.

They were shown into a room, and in a little time the door opened and a man of middle age entered.

"You desire to see me?" he asked.

"Yes, if you are Mr. Goodwin," Billy spoke up.

"Well, I am he," the banker assured, "so speak right out. What is it that you know concerning my wife?"

"Is she missing from home, sir?"

"She is. If you have seen this morning's papers you must know that."

"Haven't seen the papers, sir, but I have seen your wife."

"You have? Where is she, young man? Tell me instantly everything that you know."

"Must go just a little slow," Billy observed, "to be sure of my ground. I believe your wife has a brother?"

"Yes, yes; but go on. What have you to tell?"

"Does that brother seem worried over her being missing?"

"Yes, he does. He has scoured the city."

"And of course you couldn't suspect him of playing false, and being at the bottom of the whole mystery, could you? He couldn't have any object in depriving your wife of her liberty in order to make her sign an important paper—"

"What do you know?" the banker thundered, his face flushed. "Speak right out, and no more beating around it."

CHAPTER XIII.

BILLY MAKES AN ARREST.

MR. GOODWIN'S demand was imperative.

Billy had no further excuse for delay, so he laid the matter bare.

"Good heavens! can this be true?" the banker exclaimed, when he had heard all the lad had to tell.

"It is as true as the Constitution or the Declaration of Independence," the informant assured.

"Yes, yes, I do not doubt your word, young man, but it seems so impossible. Is Goodridge Whitstone such a rascal? It must be so, for there does not seem to be any room for doubt. My wife's word for it ought to be sufficient."

"And what are you going to do about it, sir?" Billy asked.

"I am just trying to think what move I ought to make," the banker reflected.

"Of course you want to rescue your wife, and—"

"Yes, to be sure; but whether to arrest her brother or not, I do not know. He deserves to be punished."

"Well, I should say so!" Broadway Billy cried, indignantly. "If I was you I would sock it right to him."

In his excitement his accustomed inelegance of language cropped out.

"Yes, I know, but he is my wife's brother, and if she would forgive him and spare him I will do the same. She might wish to do that. But, see here, you have not told me the street and number where she is being detained. I must know that by all means, or your information will be worthless to me."

"I have been holding that back for the last," Billy declared. "She is in a miserable den away over in the Chinese quarter of the town."

"Heavens!"

"And imprisoned in the most miserable of rooms, too. This brother of hers has given the woman strict orders to keep her till he sees her once more, and then he is going to decide her fate. If she won't sign the paper, I don't know what he intends to do with her."

"Is it so bad as that?"

"You can't seem to realize that it is serious, sir, because she is in the hands of her own brother, but I wouldn't be surprised if he tried to kill her if she held out and refused to sign."

"Well, well, he shall be prevented from doing that. But give me the street and number."

Billy did so.

"And now, who are you?" the banker next asked.

"Well, that don't particularly matter," Billy responded, "but we are two chaps from New York, abroad taking in some of the sights."

"But your names?"

Billy gave them.

"I am not inclined to disbelieve you," the banker observed, "but it seems to me a little strange that such a neat-appearing boy as you should catch on behind a carriage and follow it to its destination, like a street Arab might do; and just for fun, as you called it."

"I see I have got to unfold myself to your inspection," Billy remarked, and he took his letters from his pocket and handed them over.

"What!" the banker exclaimed as he read, "a letter from Jonas Herman, of the — Bank; why, I know him well; and others from prominent New Yorkers, to say nothing of this one from a professional detective. My lad, let me shake your hand."

The banker held out his hand in earnest frankness, and Billy grasped it in a hearty manner.

"Now that you know all about me," he said, "I'll go further. I was in disguise last night, if it can be called that, though this style of dress is more like a disguise for me. I was in my boot-black outfit, and was a genuine Arab, just as I used to be in New York."

The banker handed back the letters, saying:

"It is all explained now. I understand. Now, since you are really a detective, young man, allow me to consult with you. What had I better do in this matter? I mean, how proceed?"

"Well, sir," was Billy's response, "my layout may not suit you, but I'll give it to you for what it's worth."

"Do so."

"I happen to know that that rascally brother is going to see his prisoner again this forenoon. We can nab him finely if you want to do it. We can go there, taking along a couple of policemen, and if we arrive before he does, can lie in wait for him. If he is already there, which is not likely, we will be sure of him no less."

"And you will go along?"

"To be sure. There is no fun in playing detective, unless you can be in at the death."

"Very well, we will do that. I will send word to the bank that I will not be there this morning, and will order my carriage—"

"That won't do," Billy interrupted, "for he would know your turn-out if he chanced to see it."

"Yes, that is so. What is your plan?"

"Well, see how this strikes you," answered Billy, bluntly: "It is quite likely that the fellow will employ the same carriage again that he has made use of twice before. That one is to be found at the hotel where it started from last night, very probably. We will go there, or somewhere else, and engage a carriage that he will not be able to recognize as yours, but we will know his rig at sight."

"That is a good idea, and— But, good gracious! here he comes now!"

Mr. Goodwin had just caught a glimpse of a person ascending the steps, and recognized Goodridge Whitstone.

"We'll dodge out of sight, double-quick," exclaimed Billy, "and you needn't let on that any one is here. This way, Skinny!"

There was a big, hand-painted screen near at hand, and the two lads were soon concealed behind it.

No sooner were they there than the servant announced Mr. Whitstone.

"Show him right in," the banker directed.

In a moment he entered.

"Well, Vincent," he asked, as he sunk down upon the nearest chair, "any news of the missing one?"

"You need not ask that," was the response.

"Why not? I am not a mind-reader."

"If she had been found you would have been notified."

"Oh, yes, pardon me. Well, well, it is terrible. I just dropped in to see if you have any new hope. I must go right on. Whose cab at the door?"

"A caller who has stepped out for a moment."

"Ab, yes. Well, I will go right on, for I am bound to find my sister if she is in this city, or something about her if she is out of it."

"I wish you success. I have been almost in despair."

"She shall be found!"

"I hope she may."

Whitstone hastened away, and Billy and Skinny came out from their place of hiding.

"That is nifty, anyhow," Billy observed.

"Is he the same man you saw last night?" the banker asked.

"Yes, he is the same rooster," the lad declared.

"That settles his fate, then. He shall be arrested and punished. To think that he could come here with such a double face!"

"I have an idea that he will watch to see who gets into that cab of ours," Billy remarked.

"Will you let your servant go out and pay the man and dismiss him, Mr. Goodwin?"

"Why, certainly."

"Very well, send him this and tell him to go."

A servant was summoned, and the driver was soon paid and sent away.

"Now," Billy further observed, "if there is a rear way by which we can get out of the house, let's be going, for the sooner we are on the spot now the better."

"I will be with you in a very few moments."

The banker went from the room, telephoned to the bank that he would not be there, and then telephoned to a police station for two policemen to be sent to a street corner near the house where his wife was.

That attended to, he rejoined the lads and announced that he was ready, and conducted them from the house by a rear way, coming out upon another street.

Knowing just where to go to get a carriage, the banker soon found one, and the three got in and were carried off toward the Chinese quarter.

When they came near to their destination they saw two policemen standing on a corner, looking wonderingly about as though trying to imagine why they had been sent there.

Billy stopped the carriage and motioned to them, and they came up. A few words of explanation and direction were given, and the carriage went on, the policemen following on foot.

The carriage was stopped on the opposite side of the street from Mrs. McFaddin's house, and there it waited, none of its passengers getting out.

In about an hour another carriage turned into the same street, and coming on, stopped at Mrs. McFaddin's.

Billy had recognized it at sight as the one they were waiting for, and called Mr. Goodwin's attention to it. They watched to see who would get out, and sure enough it was Goodridge Whitstone.

"That's our chicken," Billy exclaimed, full of suppressed excitement, "and we'll soon have him in the pot."

The man entered the house, and no sooner had he done so than one of the two policemen came forward and arrested the driver of the carriage and took him and his vehicle away.

As soon as that was done, Billy and Mr. Goodwin and Skinny alighted from their carriage, and Billy led the way up the steps to the door, the other policeman accompanying them.

Billy rang the bell, and Mrs. McFaddin answered it. At sight of the policeman she was frightened, but before she could think of resistance the officer had her hands secured. Billy led the others right on up-stairs, cautioning them to silence as they proceeded.

Arriving at the door of the room where he knew Mrs. Goodwin was imprisoned, he knocked lightly.

"Who is there?" the rascally brother demanded.

"It is meself, Missurs McFaddin, sure," Billy answered, trying his best to imitate the landlady's voice; and he succeeded well, too, for the door was opened at once, and Goodridge Whitstone stood before them.

"Up with your hands!" cried Billy from Broadway, presenting a revolver at his breast; and the fellow obeyed quickly enough.

CHAPTER XIV.

BILLY AND SKINNY AT HEADQUARTERS.

A MORE completely astonished man than Goodridge Whitstone, is hard to imagine.

Broadway Billy's startling command, backed as it was with a weapon, was bad enough, but even worse than that was the sight of Mr. Goodwin at his back.

"You dog!" the banker thundered, "you deserve to be hanged. I knew of your perfidy when you were at my house an hour ago, and I could hardly keep my fingers from your throat then. Your fate shall rest with your sister."

With this the banker pressed on into the room, and his wife threw herself into his arms.

"That brave boy sent you here, then?" she asked.

"If you mean this young gentleman, yes," was the answer.

"Are you the lad who was in the room above me last night?" the woman inquired.

"I guess I am," Billy answered.

"But, what is to be done with this scoundrel?" the banker demanded.

"Arrest him," was the sister's firm response, "and let him feel the weight of the law for once. I disown him forever."

"If you're thinking about making a break," the voice of Broadway Billy rung out, "don't you do it, unless you want to feel a cold pill inside of you. I mean shoot, right from the trigger."

The man had been contemplating just such a move, but Billy had nipped it in the bud, and he cowered under the fire of the lad's black eyes.

Just then, too, the policeman came in, having left Mrs. McFaddin secure below, and Whitstone was taken in charge by him. He was handcuffed, and when that was done he was led down-stairs, the others following.

When they reached the hall where the landlady had been left, that good-tempered lady broke out into a torrent of abuse, directed mainly at Billy, whom she now recognized.

"Fire away, old lady," Billy laughingly invited, "I guess I can stand it. I am your Denny McGoogin, just as you suppose, and I came here last night to play just this very trick upon you. You are a smart woman, but the best of you will get tripped up once in a while."

The officer took his prisoner off, Mr. and Mrs. Goodwin going in the carriage to make a charge against them; and Billy and Skinny set out afoot for their hotel.

Mr. Goodwin insisted upon the lads' accompanying him and his wife back to their home, but Billy would not hear to it. He was, however, obliged to give the banker his address.

"Sweet pertaters!" Billy exclaimed, as soon as he and Skinny were again in their room, "but this is jest makin' Rome howl! Let me get back inter my old bootblack rig, my gay an' festive fat partner, so's I kin give satisfyin' expression to my feelin's. Can't do it in this attire, no-how."

In spite of Skinny's protests, then, Billy proceeded to make the change.

"There," he cried, when he once more stood forth as the Bootblack Bravo of old, "now Richard is himself again and th' world moves. Take a reef in my mizzen-course if this ain't life worth livin'! Whew! but we'll have tales ter tell when we get home, Skinny!"

"If we ever do get home," Skinny croaked.

"And what's ter hinder us from gettin' home?" Billy demanded. "We are alive and well, and have got th' rocks ter pay our fare. We could start to-day, if we wanted to. What are ye whinin' about?"

"It would be th' best thing that we could do, too," Skinny declared.

"Not much it wouldn't. My fun ain't commenced yet. What, go home an' let that bank be robbed? Well, hardly. Come, my gay an' festive lieutenant, don't forget your promotion, and don't try ter throw your wet blanket upon my pet skeems."

"That's all right, Billy, but here you are togged out again in your old bootblack outfit, an' Sharkey Dan will be sure ter know ye if he sees ye. You must keep shady, I tell ye."

Billy was serious, but he was determined.

"Can't help it, lieutenant," he responded. "I feel right at home in this rig, somehow, when I'm on th' war-path, and I don't mean ter lay it off again till this case is brought to a focus. There's one pint that ye remind me of, though, an' that is this: I want you to take charge of these letters of mine, fer I don't want ter lose 'em, and if I got nabbed I certainly would. Put 'em in yer pocket—there, that's right; an' now let's set out ter see th' chief o' p'lice. Sweet pertaters! but we are beginnin' ter make our mark in Fan Santisco, an' I guess we will stand all right in th' conference of Inspector Br—Come, though, we must hustle."

They left their room and the house, and when they appeared upon the street Billy inquired the way to the place they desired to find.

He was directed, and they set out.

Billy was walking ahead, for Skinny had declared that he would not walk with him; and they had gone some distance when Billy suddenly heard the loud barking of a small dog, an exclamation from Skinny, a yelp from the dog, and then the angry voice of a man.

It all took place in about one brief second, and

turning quickly, Billy was able to take in the situation at a glance. A small dog had run out and snapped at Skinny's heels, Skinny had kicked the dog, and now the owner was about to proceed to extreme measures with the thin partner.

"Kick my dawg, will ye?" the man cried; "I'll do the same fer you, an' let ye know how—"

"Hold on there, mister!" Billy suddenly chimed in; "jest hold a little hard on yer off mule an' put yer helm hard-a-port. If you attempt ter do any damage ter that shadder, you'll have ter tackle his substantial part, which same is me."

"An' who be you?" the angry man demanded.

"I'm one of Uncle Sam's free-born subjects, and you want ter bear that in mind as you go along. This shadder that your dog quite evidently mistook fer a bone, is my lieutenant, an' I can't see him damaged in any way. We will forgive th' dog, under th' circumstances, but you mustn't try ter injure my lieutenant."

Billy was facing the man now, and Skinny was out of immediate danger.

"I've a mind to have you both arrested for vagabonds," the man growled. "I don't kick my dawg myself, an' I don't mean ter let anybody else do it."

"You'd better go slow about havin' us arrested, fer th' gun might kick," cautioned the street crusader; "an' as fer not wantin' yer dorg kicked, jest keep him from runnin' out at folks. It was lucky he tackled my lieutenant instead o' me, fer if I'd kicked him there wouldn't be anything left of him but th' hole where my foot would 'a' gone through, an' that's a fact."

Several persons had collected around them by this time, and a laugh greeted Billy's quaint speech.

The man, seeing that the crowd was likely to be against him, cooled off a little.

"Well," he said, "I'll let ye off this time, but if you ever kick my dawg again it won't be well fer ye."

"An' it won't be well fer th' dorg, either," Billy assured, "if I have ter do th' kickin'—not much it won't! Ye'll pick up his head in Buffalo an' his tail in New York."

The man growled to himself as he went back into the shop he had come from, and the two lads proceeded on their way.

"Sweet pertaters! but I thought you was a goner, Skinny," Billy observed. "I know th' dog was a little feller, but one good bite would 'a' settled you, bein' that you're so thin. Say, we'd better take th' opposite side of th' street, where the sun is shinin', so that I kin see ye better, an' so that dorgs won't be so likely ter make sich mistakes. Th' sun might warp ye, though, an' then there would be worse trouble."

"Oh! do let up on that!" Skinny cried. "I'd ruther be thin and brainy, than rounded out like a Dutchman, like you."

"That settles it, my gay an' festive obese pard," rejoined Billy, "an' we'll jog right along to our destination. You'll not hear another peep out o' me. A Dutchman, indeed! Kah!"

They hastened along, and finally, after once more inquiring their way, found the place they were seeking.

Billy and his lieutenant went boldly in, and several policemen had their eyes upon him in a moment.

"I want ter see th' high priest of this 'stablishment," the Bootblack Bravo announced. "I want ter have an interview with yer high cock-alorum, or whatever ye call him out here. In New York we call him Inspector Br— What be ye starin' at so? Didn't ye never see a New York bootblack afore?"

The officers smiled and winked at one another, and one asked:

"What do you want to see the chief for, sonny?"

"Well, now," returned Billy, as he unsung his box, and sat down upon it, "if it was somethin' that I could unsung ter ordinary folks like you, I wouldn't taken all th' trouble ter come here, fer I could 'a' found a perlice-man asleep on almost any corner. No, sir-ee! I am here ter see th' boss—ther captain—ther chief—ther Tycoon—an' I must see him, too. I have got on ter one of th' biggest things that ye ever dreamed of, an' I want ter disclose th' skeem ter ther chief hisself an' nobody else. If I can't see him, not a word do ye git out o' me, an' that is flat."

"You are a tonguey little rooster, anyhow," the officer remarked. "I'll let the chief know you want to see him, but he won't let you in unless you state your business first."

"Then he won't see me at all, an' that's flat!" rejoined the boy decisively. "Tell yer High

Muck-a-Muck I am a bootblack nabob, all th' way from New York, an' that I've got a big piece of rascality ter disclose ter him. If he won't see me, then I'll go an' discharge my cargo inter th' ears of th' private detectives, that's all."

"Well, wait a moment and I'll see what he says."

The officer disappeared, and in a few minutes returned and motioned Billy to follow him.

"Come along, Skinny!" and together the boys followed the officer into the office of the chief.

"Well, young man, what can I do for you?" that official asked.

"Before I orate," Billy responded, "it may be well ter make myself known to ye, chief. Lieutenant Skinny, jest pass my letters over to his Highness."

Skinny nervously went down into his pocket and brought out the letters, which he laid upon the police official's desk.

The chief read them all, his face remaining as immobile as that of a plaster bust that stood on the top of a bookcase near by. When he had done he simply motioned for the officer to retire, and the two lads were left alone in his presence.

"I am glad to know you, my brave boy," the chief then said to Billy, giving his hand. "Sit right down here, now, and I will listen to what you have to disclose. I am sure that it is no trivial matter, but something important."

"You can bet your year's salary that it is," averred Billy; and he sat down and proceeded to lay the whole matter out before the astounded official.

CHAPTER XV.

BILLY AND SKINNY IN A TRAP.

THE amazement of the officer increased as Billy proceeded, and when the lad had done he exclaimed:

"Boy, you are a wonder!"

"Oh! draw it mild!" Billy demurred; "it's only dumb luck."

"Not much it isn't. It has been no dumb luck that has won such letters of recommendation as these."

He handed Billy's letters back, as he spoke, and Billy passed them over to his partner, saying:

"Here, Lieutenant Skinny, take charge of th' dockymints."

Skinny took them and put them away in an inner pocket.

"So you'll take charge of th' case and scoop th' rascals in, will ye?" Billy asked.

"Most assuredly," the officer declared. "This Sharkey Dan you speak of is an escaped convict, and the police are on the lookout for him in every city in the land. It will be a big thing for us to take him."

"An' it will be a big thing for me, too," Billy assumed, "for I have bagged him twice before, and this will be the third time, if nothin' bu'sts."

"Good for you! I will take care that nothing miscarries."

"And if nothin' happens, I and my lieutenant will be on hand ter see th' fun, too," Billy further announced. "Jest pass th' word to yer men not ter mistake us for part of Sharkey Dan's gang."

"I will do that, and you shall see the game bagged if you are on hand."

Some further talk was had, the officer asking Billy a great many questions, and finally the two lads took their leave.

"Sweet pertaters! but it is a big thing ter be great!" Billy exclaimed as they went away. "Jest ter think of it, my gay an' festive partner, here we have been hob-nobbin' with th' great police mogul of Fran Sancisco. I'll tell ye what, Fatty, we are bound ter make our mark in th' world, as the heavy-weight said when he fell on th' ice. Who would 'a' thought that we'd tumble inter sich a stroke o' luck at sich short notice? Hang me up by my surspenders if we don't go an' diae with th' mayor of th' city, afore we move on ter pastures now new. Won't th' folks at home open their eyes when we write to 'em. Oh! we're solid in the cornference of Inspector Br— Hello! here's some o' these dude uniformed bootblacks. Now fer some fun."

They had come suddenly to a corner where several bootblack chairs were stationed, and where all seemed busy, as every chair held a customer.

"You'd better not be too fresh 'ere," Skinny cautioned, "or they will mount you and polish your eyes for you."

"None of yer wet blanket now, Skinny, please," was Billy's rejoinder; "I'm goin' in fer a little fun."

He unsung his box while speaking, and now shouted:

"Shine! Shine! Right this way fer yer New York patch o' moonlight on yer boots! Do 'em up so quick that you won't know it's done till ye look. Make ye think that ye've stepped right inter a fortune. Polish 'em up so that ye won't need any better lookin'-glass. Make ye think ye've jest stepped out of a tub o' varnish. Shine!"

Everybody looked, and especially the regular bootblacks, and a gentleman who had evidently been waiting for a chance, put his foot upon Billy's box.

"That's th' idee!" Billy cried, as he got right down to business in his old style, "an' I'll show ye how we do it in New York. We don't put on no lugs there, you bet. We don't have no time ter polish our buttons. It is git up an' git with us, an' this is th' way we do it. How will ye have it sir? plain black, or blue-black with a gilt edge? No extra charge fer th' gilt edge, but I reckon plain black would suit your style best. See yer face in it? There, that's one done, and now fer th' other."

Billy was working away at his fastest and best, his tongue rattled right on, and quite a crowd soon collected around him.

In about two minutes the work was done, and the gentleman found that he had a "shine" that he was proud of.

He joked with Billy for a moment, paid his price, and went off, and another foot was put upon the lad's box immediately.

Billy set to work again, but before he had finished with his second customer one of the regular bootblacks there collared him.

"See here," the man cried, "if you don't want to be 'rested, you had better move along. I'll call a policeman and have you run in if you don't go. You can't come on this corner in this style."

"Well, wait till I finish this job," Billy requested, "or else I may be sued for breach o' contract. Must keep out o' trouble if I kin. Didn't come here ter git inter trouble. Most peaceful feller ye ever seen in all—"

He was suddenly stopped short. Another of the bootblacks caught hold of his collar and pulled him to his feet and applied his boot to him.

"Sweet pertaters!" cried Billy, "but this is rather a warm reception fer one member of th' bootblack brotherhood ter git from his feller-pards in th' same line, an' I object ter it. See here, you buck-toothed, red-headed, pug-nosed, crooked-necked son of sand-snipe, you! see how ye like that!"

Billy caught hold of the fellow (and he was a young man of twenty-two or so), twirled him around, and laid him on his back before he knew what had happened; and then, before any time was wasted, he applied his dander to the fellow's face and made him look like a demon from Inferno.

The crowd roared with laughter, and just then came the old cry of warning from Skinny:

"Scoot, Billy, th' coppers is comin'!"

Billy snatched up his box and broke through the crowd and was off like a wild stag, Skinny after him, and in a few moments they were out of danger.

"Served ye right," Skinny cried, when they stopped running.

"What served me right?"

"Th' kickin' ye got. It tickled me all over."

"Don't see why it should tickle ye so; it didn't tickle me any."

"It served ye out fer yer freshness. Mebbey it will take some of it out of ye. You'll git worse than that, if ye keep on."

"It wouldn't s'prise me a bit, Skinny. But how d'ye think th' feller liked th' New York tumble I gave him, and his blackened mug?"

"He'll have it in for you, if he sees you again. But, say, we are in danger now, Billy, surc pop!"

"How so?" Billy asked.

"Why, while you was blackin' that fellow up, who should I see but that young feller that I overheard talkin' ter Sharkey th' other night, th' one that I follered home; an' he knowed who we was."

"Sweet pertaters! is that so? I guess we have given 'em all th' shake, now, though, so don't let it worry ye."

"And where are ye goin' now?"

"I think I'll drop around an' see our friend th' Chinese Emperor, or whatever they call him. See if Sam Foo Chow will know me in my best."

"You mean that?"

"Cert; come right along, an' we'll scare up some more fun."

"You are welcome ter have th' fun all ter yerself, if that was a sample of it," Skinny declared.

Billy led the way, and knowing the direction of the Chinese quarter, they bent their steps in that direction.

They saw much to amuse them on the way, and were in no hurry. Their time was their own, and they meant to enjoy it for its full value. They little thought that two evil-looking men were upon their track.

Into street after street they ventured, until finally they found themselves in a decidedly hard-looking quarter.

"Sweet pertaters!" Billy exclaimed, "but this looks like some of th' shady spots of New York. It's a hard hole, Skinny, that I'll bet."

"Ginger, yes!" echoed Skinny. "Let's get on and out of it without delay."

"I'm willin', fer I don't like th' looks of th' citizens."

They moved forward rapidly, but they had not gone far when both were seized from behind by powerful arms, and before they could resist they were run into a narrow alley that was right at hand.

The men who had been following them had come upon them silently, and before the lads were aware of their presence they were prisoners.

The alley was dark and dirty, and it ended in a little court that was even less promising in appearance. It was a noisome hole, and filth abounded everywhere.

"We couldn't 'a' got 'em inter a neater trap, hey, pard?" one of the rascals observed.

"Ye're howlin' we couldn't!" agreed the other.

"An' now let's do fer 'em quick, an' be off."

The lads were held at such a disadvantage that their struggles were useless, though Billy's were by no means weak ones. He was doing his best to get free, but the man, holding his arms from behind, was too powerful for him to shake off.

"If you know when you're well off, you'll let me go," Billy cried.

"We will, eh?" the man sneered. "We know about that. Ye'd better think over yer prayers, if ye know any, fer ye are goin' where they don't have any ice in summer, an' that's straight."

Billy saw that his struggles were futile, so he began to shout for help.

That was the fatal thing for him to do, and yet perhaps it saved his life, for it caused the two rascals to make haste.

"Curse ye!" they cried, and both seeming to have the same thought at the same moment, they jerked the two lads toward each other and cracked their heads together in a murderous manner.

Skinny's head dropped instantly over upon his shoulder, and in a moment Billy sunk down limp and unconscious.

"Jest as like as not them yells will bring th' p'lice," growled one of the men, "an' we must hurry an' git away from here."

"Right ye are," agreed the other. "Jest kick in that winder there, an' we'll dump 'em inter th' old suller fer th' present, an' ter-night we'll come an' finish 'em, or git th' Chinese ter do it."

There was a narrow window, about a foot high and three feet long, in one of the walls, right on a level with the ground, and this one of the men kicked in.

As soon as that was done, the boys were dragged to the opening and forced in, Billy and his box first, and Skinny after him.

No sooner was this accomplished than the two ruffians hastened away, and were soon out of immediate danger.

But no one had witnessed their crime, and no one knew the fate the two brave boys had met.

Not a sound came up from the dark depths beyond the window, and had the guilty ones returned to the scene of their crime, even several hours later, they might have felt satisfied that they had accomplished their design.

CHAPTER XVI.

THAT RING DOES GOOD SERVICE.

It was a close call for the two boys' lives.

As has been said, however, their lives were no doubt saved by Billy's calls for help.

Had he not done so, the two powerful villains would have been in less haste than they were after that, and might have used knives upon their victims.

Even as it was, the whole afternoon passed and night came on before Billy recovered his consciousness; and Skinny was even longer than that; for without the help Billy rendered him, he might have died.

It was some time before Billy could realize what had happened, and it was longer before he could move. Skinny was lying right across him, a dead weight, and when Billy finally remembered what had taken place, he feared that his thin partner was dead.

"Sweet pertaters!" he mentally exclaimed, "but I reckon we're done fer, this time. I guess I'm as good as dead, an' I'm 'fraid Skinny is even worse off. Hang me if I kin move a finger!"

Gradually, however, he regained the use of his limbs, and finally was strong enough to roll Skinny off of him and to get upon his feet.

His head felt very sore, and his brain was dizzy.

Not a thing could be seen, but he realized that he was in a cellar that was damp, foul-smelling and filthy.

As soon as he had exercised his limbs enough to have the use of them in some degree, he felt around to get hold of Skinny again. He feared that his slender partner was dead, and almost dreaded to touch him.

When he got hold of the poor fellow, he felt to see if his heart was beating. At first he feared that it was not, but presently he found that it was, though in a very faint manner.

"Sweet pertaters!" he exclaimed, "but I guess there is a little spark o' life left in him, an' I must see if I kin fan it inter a blaze. It won't do ter let him die— Sweet pertaters, no! Must do all I kin fer him. Wonder how long we've been in this hole? It seems like a year, ter judge by th' soreness I feel."

While muttering thus, he had set to work to rub Skinny's limbs as briskly as he could, a process which he kept up steadily, until at last the thin partner gave a gasp and came to.

"Be ye alive, lieutenant?" Billy inquired. "Hang me if I didn't think you was a gone gosling, sure pop. Keep yer pump a-goin', my gay an' festive pard, fer we mustn't allow 'em ter do us up in this way."

Billy spoke cheerfully enough, but he found that Skinny was not yet able to talk. In fact, the thin partner soon went off into another faint, and for an hour or longer Billy had to work his hardest to bring him out of it.

Fully three hours passed, from the time when Billy had first come to, before Skinny was able to sit up and talk. He owed his life to Billy's persistent efforts to save him.

All this exercise had redounded to Billy's good, for he was by this time almost as good as new, except that there was a spot on his head that was terribly sore.

"How d'ye feel now?" Billy finally asked.

"Awful bad," Skinny moaned. "I don't feel able ter hold up my head, Billy."

"Ye must brace up, though, lieutenant," Billy tried to encourage, "fer we have got ter git out of this hole and make good our escape afore they come ter finish us, if that is their intention, unless they think we are dead already."

"Well, you feel around, Billy, and see if you kin find any way out, an' I'll try ter git hold o' some strength."

"That's th' talk! Try yer hardest, Skinny, an' you will pull through, even if ye was almost a goner. You're good for another round yet."

Billy left him then, and began to feel around the hole they were in. It was a cellar, as said, and there was a good deal of rubbish in it. Billy fell over things in every direction.

"Sweet pertaters!" he cried out, "if I was in th' habit o' swearin', which I ain't, I'd be tempted ter swear now. Hang me if I don't believe we have waked up in th' bad place below, Skinny. Say, haven't ye got a match?"

"Come ter think of it," answered Skinny, "I believe I have some matches. I will feel an' see."

"It strikes me that you'll have ter do th' feelin' without seein'," Billy joked.

"Yes, here's some," Skinny soon announced, and he lighted one to guide Billy back to him.

By its light they looked around their prison. It was a dismal hole. There were old boxes, barrels, broken furniture, etc., everywhere. High up was the broken window through which they had been pitched. On one side was a flight of steps leading up to a floor above.

"That's better," Billy cried, "an' I'll soon see where these steps go to. I mean ter git out of here if it is in th' wood. Sweet pertaters! we didn't come all th' way ter Fan Cransisco ter be killed like rats! Not much we didn't, an' it won't do fer us ter give up th' ghost and so lose

th' confederation of Inspector Br— Hello! hang me if I don't hear somebody comin'!"

He blew out a match that he had just lighted, and listened.

Sure enough, steps were heard overhead, and soon a key was heard to turn in the lock of a door, and a light appeared at the head of the stairs.

Broadway Billy drew his revolver, for he now carried one, as has been shown; and he and Skinny waited in breathless suspense.

A pair of heavy boots thumped on the steps, followed by another, and after them came the lighter sound of Chinese shoes.

Down they came, and Billy and Skinny, by a hasty agreement, pretended to be dead, or asleep.

"I guess they're done fur," one of the men growled, as he took a look in the direction in which he had expected to find them, and saw them lying in a heap under the window.

"Oh, they're dead enough," agreed the other. "That fall was enough ter kill 'em, ter say nothin' of th' bumps we gev 'em."

"That's so, an' there won't be nothin' fer th' Chinese ter do but ter git 'em out o' sight, either by buryin' 'em, or dumpin' 'em in th' bay."

"That's all. You've got a snap of it, John."

"Allee same muchee bettee," responded a villainous-looking Celestial, who was coming down after them, followed by three others of his kind.

The man with the lamp advanced toward the place where the boys lay, kicking the debris out of his way as he did so, and had nearly reached them when, with a sudden spring, Broadway Billy was upon his feet and pointing a revolver straight at his head.

"Move an inch, any one of you," he shouted out, "and I'll make a hole clear through ye."

The men fell back in the greatest alarm.

"Put that lamp on that shelf," Billy immediately commanded, seeing a shelf near where the man who held the lamp stood; "and be quick about it, or you die in your tracks. We'll stand no nonsense now, fer I'm on ther shoot!"

The fellow had not got over the first shock yet, so he obeyed the order.

"And now up with your hands!"

The command was given as sternly as though Billy were a veteran detective, and he was obeyed. But now the reaction came, and the men cursed wildly, threatening all manner of dire vengeance if the revolver was not put out of sight immediately.

"Don't you move," Billy ordered, "or it will puke lead at ye in solid lumps as big as yer thumbs. Every shot will tell, too, fer I am Buff'ler Bill on the shoot."

He held the best hand, if he could only keep the advantage. The faces of the two men were deathly pale, and the Chinese were in no better condition.

"See here," Billy suddenly cried, addressing them, and holding up his left hand as he did so, "do you recognize this ring, and this mark on my wrist?"

The effect of this was almost magical! The Celestials became greatly excited, and chattered among themselves for a moment like so many geese. They leaned forward to take a closer look at the ring and mark. They were evidently satisfied, for immediately they dropped to their knees!

This action was a great surprise to the two villains who had brought them there to help them dispose of their victims.

The leader of the four Chinamen said something in Chinese, which of course Billy could not understand.

"You'll have to talk plain English," he said.

"Whatee want Chinamans do?" the heathen inquired. "Allee same fiends of 'Melicans. Do whatevel wantee, now ev'ly time!"

"In the name of your Great Consulate General, then," said Billy, speaking as impressively as he could, "I command you to secure these two men and bind their hands and feet. If they resist I will shoot them down in their tracks."

The Chinamen understood, and without a word, except an exclamation in their own language, they hurled themselves upon the two now demoralized rascals, and bore them to the ground, where they soon had them secured.

This action proved that the Chinamen were to be depended on, so Billy put away his revolver and held out his hand to their leader.

"That was well done, John," he cried, "and you deserve the thanks of th' court. Put it there, rascal though you are."

The Celestial shook hands with him, asking: "How 'Melican boy get ling and mark?"

"Got it from the Consulate," Billy responded. Holding the advantage he had gained, the

young detective ordered the Chinamen to carry the prisoners up to the floor above; which was soon done.

When they went out of the cellar Billy found that it was night, and for the first time he thought to look at his watch. The watch was uninjured, and was running, and it indicated a quarter after eleven.

"Sweet potatoes!" he ejaculated, "is it possible that we were so long unconscious? No wonder that we felt stiff. Skinny, it is a wonder that we are not dead in solid earnest. We have had a close call this time, and that's a fact. Whew! but it is gettin' on to th' time of that other affair that we must have a hand in! It will never do ter miss that, if we want ter keep solid in th' confederence of Inspector Br—. But, come, no time ter chin now, so we'll act more an' talk less."

CHAPTER XVII.

SCOOPING THE SCHOOL.

THE Broadway crusader sent one of the Chinamen out to find a policeman, and as soon as one was brought the situation was explained to him.

The prisoners were taken off to a station, Billy and Skinny going along to make charges against them, the Chinamen being allowed to get off free, as they had given such good help.

As soon as that business was attended to, Billy and Skinny made their way to their hotel, where, feeling pretty bad, the thin partner went to bed and gave up, for the time being. But not so Billy. He changed his clothes, and when he had seen Skinny properly attended, sallied out into the night.

It was now close upon one o'clock, so he hastened his steps in the direction of the Placer Bank. Not a suspicious sight or sound was to be seen or heard, and he entered the open doorway of the building on the opposite side of the street, boldly, as though he belonged there. As soon as he had passed far enough up the steps to be in the shadow, he stopped and sat down on the steps to watch.

He had been there twenty minutes, perhaps, when he heard some one coming down the street, and presently a policeman was in sight. He was walking leisurely, swinging his club, and when he came to the bank he ascended the steps and knocked lightly at the door. The upper part of the door was of glass, and a man was soon seen to come forward. Some words were exchanged, and the door was opened. The next moment the two men were seen struggling together for the mastery, but, the struggle was brief, for other forms appeared upon the scene, and it soon ended.

Billy, looking at the windows of the building that adjoined the bank, saw a head out of one of them. When all had become quiet in the bank the head was withdrawn, and the window was shut down. Billy took this to be his chance to cross to the bank, but, still fearful that such an act as crossing the street might balk the plans of the police, he curbed his impatience and waited. He was soon rewarded, for, presently, the sound of angry voices was heard, followed by the firing of revolvers. In another moment a man dashed out of the house next to the bank and darted across the street, as though fleeing for his life, for a policeman was right after him. At the curb the officer tripped and fell, and the man dashed on.

Broadway Billy was down the steps in three strides, and reached the curb just in time to meet the escaping burglar face to face. It was Sharkey Dan.

"Whoop!" cried the brave lad; "up with your hands, Sharkey, or I'll let the night winds whistle a dirge through yer carcass!"

The rascal tried to draw a weapon, but, before he could do so, Billy fired, and down tumbled his man, all in a heap. Other policemen came running out of the house and the bank just then. One was the chief in person. As soon as he took in the situation he complimented Billy highly. An examination proved that Sharkey was not fatally hit. He was carried back into the bank and an ambulance was sent for.

It was a victory complete for the police, and an utter defeat for the robbers, every one of them being taken, though the leader no doubt would have made good his escape had it not been for the Bootblack Bravo.

Next day the city rung with the news, the papers were full of it, and Billy was the hero of the hour. The directors of the bank met and voted him a reward of five hundred dollars, which Billy scrupulously divided with his partner.

Goodridge Whitstone was promptly punished

for his crime. Could he have forced his sister to sign a certain paper, he would have robbed her and her children of their share of a fortune that had been left them by a relative. In his boldness he was trusting to his sister's affection for his safety. He did not think she would betray him, even after so great a crime. His coachman accomplice, as well as Mrs. McFaddin, shared his fate; there was no let up in their cases.

Dan Bingham and his confederates were committed, to await trial, but, in some way or other the slippery "Sharkey" managed to escape before he was landed in prison, and disappeared, swearing dire vengeance upon his youthful captor. Lenus Demson, the janitor of the building adjoining the bank, had sought that position for the very purpose of helping on the robbery. He was scooped in with the rest, and isn't growing fat or happy on prison rations.

THE END.

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